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School Board Approval Process

Understanding the School Board Approval Process: Tips for Getting on the Agenda and Presenting Your Recommendation

Use the checklists below to help you: (1) get on your school board agenda to present your SHAC recommendation; (2) prepare your agenda item and presentation to the school board; and (3) present your recommendation for a sexual health education curriculum.

Submitting an Item for the Board Agenda

- Identify a helpful and knowledgeable district employee who can submit items for the Board agenda; they are usually department heads (refer to district's procedures for submitting an agenda item).
- Review your district's procedures for submitting an item for the school board agenda. Refer to the district policies on Board meetings – also known as “BE (local)” – for specific procedures and timelines for agenda submissions. Refer to **Finding Policies and Programs** to locate district policies.
- Review your district's agenda preparation calendar, published on the district's website, to familiarize yourself with important dates in the Board agenda process.

Look for a calendar of “annually recurring Board agenda items” that outlines when the Board discusses items annually. This will help you identify and select appropriate months for submitting recommendations when the agenda is not already filled with important district business (Tip: avoid May / June when Boards are busy discussing next year's budget).
- Be prepared if your recommendation is not included in the agenda for the meeting you wanted because other pressing issues took precedence. Follow up with the Board liaison (or other district person who sets the agenda) to see when the recommendation might make it onto the agenda.
- Allow plenty of time for the agenda process. If you want to implement a policy or program at the beginning of the school year (in September), it is best to submit the recommendation early in the agenda calendar (by January).
- Prepare for additional SHAC or subcommittee meetings during the agenda process. The policy administration (PA) office and/or cabinet will likely send an item back for revision, especially if it is a complex or sensitive issue. SHAC members should anticipate additional meetings to address suggested revisions.
- Have someone available to discuss the recommendation and curriculum if district administrators and/or Board members want additional information.



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Preparing Your Agenda Item and Presentation for the Board

The agenda item is what you will submit to the district to get on the Board agenda; the presentation is what you will formally present at a public Board meeting. These are separate and distinct steps that are part of the district’s process of policymaking, but you will have to provide the same materials in both cases – the agenda setting step ensures you have all of the necessary materials so the Board can make an informed decision after your formal presentation.

- Give Board members sufficient time to review the recommendation and accompanying documentation, including the selected curriculum.
- Plan for more than one presentation to the Board when preparing your agenda item / presentation and materials.
Examine the specifications of the meeting room from a presentation perspective: Is there good audio-visual equipment? Will the presentation be projected on a screen or a wall? Is the lighting very bright (i.e., windows are a problem for daytime presentations)? You will need to adjust your presentation materials to account for these variations.
- Identify at which Board meeting(s) you will need to present: you might have to present at the agenda review meeting and/or workshop in addition to the regular Board meeting.
- The person in charge of the agenda / meeting process will inform you which meetings to attend – for complex and potentially controversial items, you will probably have to present at the review meeting / workshop because administrators and Board members might have more questions.
- Ask how much time you will have to present at the meeting (presentations are usually allotted 5 to 15 minutes).
- Meet informally with Board members before the meeting, if possible, to address any questions. Invite Board members to SHAC meetings where you will be discussing the issue of interest or recommendation.
- Ensure that the information in your presentation is also included in the agenda item that the Board members will review – do not add anything new (Board members do not like surprises).
- Notify SHAC members of the dates of presentations so they can attend. Only two or three SHAC members may speak as part of the presentation, but it is always good to have visible support from the other members.



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Preparing Your Agenda Item and Presentation for the Board (cont'd)



Prepare your agenda item / presentation so that it outlines the rationale and recommendations for changing current policy according to the local (district/city) situation, using graphs and images to support your argument:

- Describe current consequences of teen sexual behavior in terms of local public health (pregnancy and STD/HIV rates), educational achievement (dropouts), and district expenditures (cost of daycare and/or homebound education);
- Describe the current policy / curriculum, highlighting its deficiencies (why is a change in policy / curriculum needed?);
- Review state and district policies on 'human sexuality instruction' (e.g **Texas Education Code § 28.004**);
- Describe the benefits of using an evidence-based program that has demonstrated behavioral change (i.e., delaying sexual initiation among teens) and covers information on contraception (i.e., need to give useful information to those teens who are already sexually active);
- Describe the process through which the district's SHAC selected the program you are recommending (highlight the role of parents in the process) and display the resolution statement for your recommendation;
- Provide an overview of the selected program / curriculum and summarize findings from behavioral studies;
- Describe how the program will be implemented in district's schools, including which grades, which courses, and by whom;
- Describe the cost of the program / curriculum, including applicable teacher training, and the source of funding for implementation;
- Describe how parents will be involved in implementation of program, such as informational meetings to notify parents of policy /curriculum, the procedure for consent, and parent activities in the program (if applicable);
- Describe how (or if) the SHAC will assist in the implementation and monitoring of program; include a timeline for reviewing policy / curriculum to make any changes (e.g., three or four years) after observing the process and outcomes of implementation.