

South Carolina Health Science Education Overview

The mission of South Carolina secondary health science education programs is to prepare high school students with broad foundational knowledge and skills needed by all healthcare professionals. Programs are tailored to meet the needs of individual students and postsecondary education requirements. Through HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America), a career and technical student organization that supports the health science career cluster, students have opportunities to develop their leadership skills, participate in community service, and apply for scholarship awards. Community resources and healthcare industry partnerships strengthen the delivery of the health science program of study that integrates academics, specific health science courses, and portfolio development, along with a variety of work-based learning opportunities. Work-based learning experiences may include job shadowing, internships, and other clinical experiences that allow students to observe and learn from healthcare professionals. Students enrolled in a health science program of study leave high school better prepared for further education and/or immediate employment in the healthcare field.

Programs are required to have an advisory committee to bring together business and industry, teachers, parents, students, and counselors to collaborate and develop effective health science programs that meet workforce and student needs. These stakeholders are invited to advise local administrators and teachers as to the community workforce needs. They are also needed to endorse and recommend additions to the health science state/industry course standards that are revised/revisited on a five-year frequency.

South Carolina health science courses are based on the National Healthcare Foundation Standards. Health science standards combine classroom instruction and work-based learning experiences with an emphasis on the healthcare foundation standards. The core is a set of broad standards that serve as a foundation and functions across health sciences. These standards specify core knowledge and skills needed by healthcare professionals and were developed and validated by the National Consortium for Health Science Education: www.healthscienceconsortium.org.

- **Academic Foundation:** Healthcare professionals will know academic subject matter required for proficiency in their areas. They will use this knowledge as needed in their roles.
- **Communication:** Healthcare professionals will know the various methods of giving and obtaining information. They will communicate effectively orally, in writing, and electronically.
- **Systems:** Healthcare professionals will understand how their roles fit into their departments, their organizations, and the overall health care environment. They will identify how key systems affect services they perform and quality of care.
- **Employability Skills:** Healthcare professionals will understand how employability skills enhance their employment opportunities and job satisfaction. They will demonstrate skills that support and maintain job functions and upgrade these skills as needed.
- **Legal Responsibility:** Healthcare professionals will understand the legal responsibilities, limitations, and implications of their actions in the health care delivery setting. They will perform their duties according to regulations, policies, laws, and legislated rights of clients.

- **Ethics:** Healthcare professionals will understand accepted ethical practice with respect to cultural, social, and ethnic differences within the health care environment. They will perform their duties according to established ethical guidelines, supporting sensitive and quality healthcare delivery.
- **Safety Practices:** Healthcare professionals will understand existing and potential hazards to clients, coworkers, and to themselves. They will prevent injury or illness through safe work practices and follow health and safety policies and procedures.
- **Teamwork:** Healthcare professionals will understand the roles and responsibilities of individual members as part of the healthcare team, including their ability to promote the delivery of quality health care. They will interact effectively and sensitively with all members of the healthcare team.
- **Health Maintenance Practices:** Healthcare professionals will understand the fundamentals of wellness and the prevention of disease processes. They will practice preventive health behaviors with and among their clients.
- **Technical Skills:** Healthcare professionals will apply technical skills required for all career specialties. They will demonstrate skills and knowledge as appropriate.
- **Information Technology Applications:** Healthcare workers will use information technology applications required within all career specialties. They will demonstrate use as appropriate to healthcare applications.

Health science certified teachers are certified, licensed, or registered healthcare professionals who have transitioned from the workplace to the high school classroom. There is a statewide curriculum that teachers are expected to deliver. Each course is complete with a set of minimum standards. It is NOT the intent of the high school health science program to be career specific, but yet to expose young people to the many career opportunities in healthcare. In the technical skills area, students are taught CPR and first aid concepts and how to measure vital signs. It is not uncommon for students to practice some of these skills of each other. Students are prepared for work-based learning experiences with a thorough knowledge of confidentiality and HIPPA regulations, standards precautions, and proper handling of blood and body fluids.

The 250 health science teachers in South Carolina represent many different health professions: registered nurses, certified athletic trainers, paramedics, dental hygienists, respiratory therapists, radiology technologists, nurse practitioners, exercise physiologists, clinical lab scientists, chiropractors, certified health education specialists, and others. Teachers tend to teach to their strengths and do have flexibility to teach beyond the minimum standards. Throughout our state, in the technical skills area, teachers vary in the skills taught. To mention a few, some programs focus on nurse aide skills, some on emergency response skills, some on sports medicine skills, and others.

Through SC health science education programs, students are provided with knowledge and skills that prepare them to be better students at the postsecondary level or to enter the workplace directly. These programs are unique and valuable in providing experiences and real-world application to healthcare. Our hope is that students completing these programs have a better understanding of expectations and requirements of healthcare professionals.