



SAMPLE EMAIL Education



Before

Dear [local school system superintendent]

I was alarmed to read the story in today's newspaper about the rapidly rising rates of absenteeism in our public schools. I am sure you and the other members of the local school board are concerned about this troubling trend as well.

As you may already be aware, asthma is not only a leading chronic illness among children in the United States—it is responsible for almost a third of all school absences.

I am a public health professional with many years of experience working across sectors to improve community health outcomes. My organization has already partnered with other school districts and health care providers in our region, and I would love to work with your administration as well to help reverse the current trend.

I would be grateful for an opportunity to meet at your convenience to discuss this idea further.

Sincerely,

Beginning a communication with a focus on problems that require urgent attention is likely to be a turn-off for prospective partners.

You may have an educated guess regarding what potential partners know (or don't) about a particular health-related issue—but your message will be more positively received if it is clear that you've done your homework and gathered information about their current involvement and knowledge before reaching out.

Emphasizing that public health has the required experience and expertise to support the goals of other sectors is effective—but these claims fall flat without specific examples, and where possible, evidence of impact.

Don't miss an opportunity to demonstrate that public health is eager to support and empower the ongoing work of other sectors, rather than come in with its own agenda. Remind potential partners that any collaboration will be guided by their own ideas and established priorities.



SAMPLE EMAIL Education (continued)



After

Dear [local school system superintendent]

I was inspired by your Op-Ed in yesterday's newspaper on the need to tackle rising rates of absenteeism in our schools. As a public health professional, I am also working to reverse the current trend. My organization has previously partnered with several school districts to achieve this goal, and the early results of our collaborations are very promising.

The teachers, administrators, classroom aids, and school nurses we worked with were all devoted to their students—but they also had many responsibilities to juggle, with too few resources and too little time. From the outset, our collaboration was aimed at making their jobs easier and saving costs where possible. My team of public health workers offered navigation support by analyzing data to identify correlations between school and community attributes, and various health as well as education outcomes. School officials set their own destinations, and we mapped out routes for getting there.

Recognizing that asthma was a significant contributor to the high rate of absenteeism, we worked with the schools to reach out to the local housing authority to evaluate whether the students' housing conditions were impacting their health. We then supported the housing officials to eliminate housing-related asthma triggers, such as pests and mold. In some districts, we also teamed up with our partners in housing to advocate for things like routine inspections and home assessments by qualified community health workers.

After just two years, the schools reported a dramatic decline in absenteeism. As one teacher said, "I wouldn't believe the numbers if they weren't sitting in my classroom." The benefits have even extended beyond the walls of the school because entire families are now able to enjoy safe and healthy housing.

I would be grateful for an opportunity to learn more from your perspective, and to explore ideas for how we might work together to strengthen the foundation that supports healthy students.

Sincerely,

Set a positive, problem-solving tone from the start of a communication to productively engage the interest and motivation of prospective partners.

Demonstrate that you've taken the time to gain knowledge of and familiarity with the sectors you wish to engage—either by referring to particular sub-sector priorities and constraints or, where possible, highlighting existing partnerships.

Use the **GPS Navigation metaphor** to explain how public health's data expertise can be harnessed to help other sectors meet their objectives and fulfill their responsibilities more effectively. And remember to put prospective partners in the driver's seat!

Sharing concrete success stories not only builds prospective partners' engagement and sense of efficacy—it helps them appreciate public health's contributions and positive real-world impact.

Leverage current partners or other professionals with cross-sector experience as messengers.

Use the **Foundation of Community Health** metaphor to explain that cross-sector collaborations are both universally supportive and also mutually reinforcing of sector-specific goals.