

An Introduction to Local Wellness Policies

On June 30, the President signed the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization of 2004 into law. This new law requires every school district to develop and implement a local wellness policy by the fall of 2006.

What must the wellness policies include?

The law specifically requires that, at a minimum, the wellness policies:

- Include goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the local educational agency determines appropriate;
- Include nutrition guidelines for all foods available on the school campus during the school day;
- Assure that the guidelines for school meals are not less restrictive than Federal standards;
- Establish a plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policies;
- Involve parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public in development of the policies.

What is the timeline?

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) intends to send a notification memo to all school districts by spring of 2005.
- All local districts will be required to have developed a local policy by the beginning of School Year 2006-2007.

How can you get involved?

Policies will be written at the school district level. Talk with school administrators and food service directors in your district about getting involved. Ways you can help include

- **Prepare.** Familiarize yourself with the current policies and practices in your district. Talk with the director of food service and physical education in your district regarding current practices and realistic opportunities for change. Find out if your school or district has a school health coordinating or advisory council and if so, talk with members as they will likely be involved in writing the wellness policy.
- **Partner.** Connect with people in the school district such as PTA members, principals, teachers, and board of education members. Get them excited about the potential to make healthy changes in your district. Partner with interested organizations such as Action for Healthy Kids, the American Dietetic Association, The School Nutrition Association, the Society for Nutrition Education, the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, and American Diabetes Association. These groups and more are taking an active role in the policy process. Likewise, local dietitians, school nurses, food service administrators, physical education teachers, health teachers, pediatricians, and other youth health promoters would be valuable partners in the process.
- **Take action.** Develop policies to improve nutrition quality, nutrition education, and physical activity in your district. Check out the resources listed at the bottom for success stories and model policies.

Areas for policy consideration

Several groups or agencies such as the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA), the Child Nutrition Forum, and USDA are developing model policies. Here are areas to consider when developing your local policies.

Development Committee Members

- Parents
- Teachers (K-12 including specialists in health, PE, and science)
- Students
- School administrators
- Food service administrators and cafeteria personnel
- Dietitians
- School nurses, physicians, or other school health professionals

All Food Served/Sold on school campuses throughout the school day

- Nutrition standards for cafeteria meals stronger than those set by USDA or affirming compliance with USDA standards
- Nutrition standards for competitive foods (snack bars, a la carte, vending, school stores, etc.)
- Policies to promote healthy fundraising and alternatives to food fundraising
- Guidance for using food as reward/punishment in classrooms
- Guidance for food at parties and special occasions
- Guidance for classroom snacks
- Food environment issues such as duration of meal times, holding recess before lunch opportunities, placement of healthier options on lunch lines, etc.

Nutrition Education

- Nutrition in health education curriculum
- Nutrition in physical education curriculum
- Nutrition education incorporated into science, math, language arts, social sciences, and electives
- Guidelines on food marketing in school
- Nutrition promotion measures in cafeteria (menu items, labeling, posters, special promotions, aesthetic environment, etc.)
- Parent/family nutrition education opportunities and initiatives
- Staff/faculty nutrition education training and staff wellness promotion programs

Physical Activity

- Regularity/duration of physical education
- Standards for physical education instructors
- Regularity/duration of recess and unstructured activity at different grade levels
- Plan for safer walking and/or biking routes to school
- Activity promoting programs and policies such as awards for walking, bike racks, etc.
- School-promoted physical activity outside of school hours such as 5K or 10K family walks, after school activities, etc.
- Role of extra/intra curricular activities in promoting physical activity

Plan for Implementation and Evaluation

- Communication with and training for teachers, parents, students, and food service personnel
- Evaluation techniques and schedule for revising and updating policies
- Timeline for implementation
- Governing authority

Other considerations

- After school programs.
- School sponsored events outside of the school day
- Policies for addressing wellness issues of students with special needs such as diabetes, allergies, weight concerns, etc.

Available Resources*

Action for Healthy Kids www.actionforhealthykids.org

American Cancer Society www.cancer.org

American Dietetic Association http://www.eatright.org/Public/GovernmentAffairs/98_12033.cfm

American Heart Association www.americanheart.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/>

Center for Science in the Public Interest/National Alliance for Nutrition and Physical Activity (NANA) www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy

Food Research Action Center www.frac.org

Getting Started with a Coordinated School Health Program (Tennessee).
<http://www.tennessee.gov/education/ci/cischhealth/cigetstartingstarted.htm>

Michigan State: Alternatives to food rewards <http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf>

National Association for Sport and Physical Education
<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm>

National Association of State Boards of Education
<http://www.nasbe.org/HealthySchools/fithealthy.mgi>

National Food Service Management Institute www.nfsmi.org

National Parent Teacher Association www.pta.org

School Nutrition Association (Formerly American School Food Service Association)
<http://www.asfsa.org/>

Society for Nutrition Education
<http://www.sne.org>

Society for State Directors of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation.
<http://www.thesociety.org/>

Tools for Eating Smart and Moving More in the Real World and Recommended Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools (North Carolina).
<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/resources/tools/index.php> and
<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/SchoolFoodsFINAL.pdf>

United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition service and Team Nutrition
<http://www.fns.usda.gov> and <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>

*This list is not intended to be comprehensive. Many non-profit organizations, associations, states, and government agencies are continuing to develop, release, edit, and re-release new materials on the issues of children, nutrition, and physical activity.

The above document was developed by members of NANA. For more information contact Jessica Donze Black, RD, MPH; Manager National Nutrition Policy for the American Dietetic Association at 202-775-8277 or jdonzeblack@eatright.org.