

Food Service Facts

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21. Local School Wellness Policies

Background

Apart from the home, many would say schools are the ideal venue in which to encourage and effect change with respect to children's health-promoting behaviors. Schools wield influence over children's development along with parents, friends and the larger community. Most American children spend approximately 2,000 hours each year at school, where not just teachers but their peers and the general environment can support positive (and negative) behaviors. Schools play a critical role in promoting student health, preventing childhood obesity, and combating problems associated with poor nutrition and physical inactivity. A wide variety of research continues to demonstrate the positive correlation between health and learning and that they are mutually reinforcing. Not only are health and education mutually reinforcing, but there also can be immediate benefits from improving the school's wellness environment – fewer students are tardy, or absent when breakfast is consumed at school and when physical activity is included in class, academic achievement improves, too. Our future well-being as individuals, as communities and as a nation lies with students in elementary and secondary schools today. For all our sakes, we must provide these students with the tools they need to achieve and succeed. The good health that results from improved nutrition and increased physical activity – and the learning that is made possible as a result – is primary among those tools.

Federal Law

Congress recognizes that schools play a critical role in promoting student health, preventing childhood obesity, and combating problems associated with poor nutrition and physical inactivity. In 2004, Congress passed the Child Nutrition and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act (Sec. 204 of Public Law 108-205). This act required by law that all sponsors participating in the National School Lunch Program or other child nutrition programs create local school wellness policies by School Year 2006. The legislation placed the responsibility of developing a school wellness policy at the local level so the individual needs of each sponsor could be addressed. In 2010, Congress passed the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Sec. 204 of Public Law 111-296), and added new provisions for local school wellness policies related to implementation, evaluation, and publicly reporting on progress of local school wellness policies. Sponsors will be held accountable for local school wellness policy implementation, assessment and public updates through the Administrative Review process. For the most up-to date information on federal regulations visit: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy>.

State Law

The 2005 Kansas Legislature passed SB154 which is now KSA 72-5128. This law supports the federal requirement for local wellness policies by directing the Kansas State Board of Education to “develop nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages made available to students in Kansas public schools during the school day....In developing such guidelines, particular attention shall be given to providing healthful foods and beverages, physical activities and wellness education with the goals of preventing and reducing childhood obesity.”

The state law also requires that “When establishing the wellness policy of the school district, the board of education of each district shall take into consideration the guidelines developed by the state board...”

On June 10, 2014, the Kansas State Board of Education approved the revised Kansas School Wellness Policy Model Guidelines (Model Guidelines) for Nutrition, Nutrition Promotion and Education, Physical Activity and Integrated School Based Wellness which are available at www.kn-eat.org, School Nutrition Programs, School Wellness Policies. The Model Guidelines were built upon best practices and research and reflected input provided by over 140 school districts and feedback from a diverse group of over 50 stakeholders representing individuals, organizations, partners and government agencies.

The model guidelines are divided into four categories of policy statements:

- Nutrition
- Nutrition Promotion and Education
- Physical Activity
- Integrated School Based Wellness

Each policy statement falls within one of three levels:

- The policy statements at the **IMPLEMENTING** level meet all requirements of current federal and state laws, regulations and policies.
- The policy statements at the **TRANSITIONING** level show growth from the implementing level.
- The policy statements at the **MODELING** level reflect highly effective practices.

Local School Wellness Policy

A local school wellness policy is a written document of official policies that guide a sponsor’s efforts to establish a school environment that promotes students’ health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. The responsibility for developing a local school wellness policy is placed at the local level so the unique needs of each school under the jurisdiction of the sponsor can be addressed.

Kansas Wellness Impact Tool

The Wellness Impact Tool that can be accessed within the KN-CLAM system is a tool in which sponsors can build a local school wellness policy based on the policy statements included in the Kansas School Wellness Policy Model Guidelines as well as report on progress compared to the model guidelines. Sponsors who choose to write their own wellness policies will have the option to upload their locally developed wellness policy into the tool; however, sponsors will still be required to complete the Wellness Impact Tool. For additional information and instructions for completing the tool, refer to the “Wellness Impact Tool Quick Reference Guide.”

Wellness Policy Committee

Within the Wellness Impact Tool, each sponsor designates a Wellness Policy Committee Chairperson who understands the local school wellness requirements, who can facilitate the development and updates of the local school wellness policy, and who has the authority to ensure that each school complies with the policy. In addition, sponsors are required to input the names and titles of the Wellness Committee.

The Wellness Policy Committee is the guiding committee for advancing wellness policy for a district or private school. The Wellness Policy Committee establishes the wellness policies for the sponsor by assessing current wellness policy needs, prioritizing policy implementation and determining action plans for the school year. A Wellness Policy Committee is a team made up of committed school and community stakeholders from these important stakeholder groups:

- Students
- Parents
- School and District Administrator(s)
- Wellness Representatives from each school
- School Board Member(s)
- School Health Professional(s)
- School Nutrition Professional(s)
- Physical Education Teacher(s)
- Teachers
- Mental Health and Social Services Staff
- Community Health Professionals
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Educators (SNAP-ed)
- Community Volunteers

It is the decision of each Sponsor who to recruit as members for the Wellness Policy Committee. However, including experts from various stakeholder groups builds a team with exceptional potential to impact wellness of school children.

Food Service Facts – Local School Wellness Policies

For tools and resources to assist in wellness policy development and implementation, visit www.kn-eat.org, School Nutrition Programs, School Wellness Policies and <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy>.