

School Wellness Policy Pointers

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization of 2004 required every school district to produce a local wellness policy for implementation on the first day of class following June 30, 2006.

What must the wellness policies include?

The minimum requirements include the following.

- 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.
- Nutrition guidelines selected by the local educational agency for all food available on each school campus under the local educational agency during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.
- Assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to the Child Nutrition Action and National School Lunch Act.
- A plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy, including

designation of one or more persons within the local educational agency or at each school, as appropriate, charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the local wellness policy.

- Involvement by parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public in developing the school wellness policy.

Additional information is available at this Web site: www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy.html

What can schools do?

1. Continue regular meetings with the wellness policy team

As noted above, the law requires several groups to be involved in determining the school wellness policy. The planning team should include:

- Parents
- School board members
- Students
- Teachers (including K-12, health educators, physical education, family and consumer science educators)
- School food service employees
- School administrators
- School nurse
- Community representatives (registered dietitians, ISU Extension staff, healthcare professionals, business/industry)

2. Assess current school environment

The legislation emphasizes that policies be written at the local level to meet needs identified by a local assessment. Several resources are available to help policy-planning teams.

Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)

www.actionforhealthykids.org

This nationwide initiative is dedicated to improving the health and educational performance of children through better nutrition and physical activity in schools. Guidance and direction is provided by more than 40 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, physical activity, and nutrition. Their Web site offers tools for action, fact sheets, presentations, and state profiles.

Children's BMI Tool for Schools Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/childrens_bmi/tool_for_schools.html

This Excel spreadsheet can be used by professionals who want to calculate BMI (body mass index) by age for up to 2000 children. A group summary of children's BMI-for-age categories and graphs for prevalence of overweight and obesity and prevalence of overweight and obesity by sex is provided.

Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn*

National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)
<http://nasbe.org/index.php/shs/53-shs-resources/396-fit-healthy-and-ready-to-learn-a-school-health-policy-guide>

This resource is intended to help planning committees understand broad policy issues by sharing sample general school health policies plus policies to encourage physical activity and healthy eating.

Improving the School Nutrition Environment: A Guide to Local Action*

www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/kit.html

This toolkit is designed to help parents, teachers, school administrators, school food service professionals, and community representatives look at their school nutrition environment and identify areas needing improvement. It includes a checklist and presentation to help create awareness. Copies are free to Iowa schools when ordered from the Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Nutrition Programs and School Transportation (Janet.Wendland@iowa.gov or call 515-281-5676).

*Iowa State University Extension nutrition and health field specialists also have these resources.

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Iowa Healthy Kids Act

www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1769:healthy-kids-act&catid=838:school-based-programs-a-services&Itemid=2545

The Iowa Healthy Kids Act establishes nutrition standards for food and beverages sold on school grounds during the school day. Although the nutrition standards apply only to the school day (bell to bell) and foods sold (not foods provided, offered, or brought from home), schools are encouraged to implement these nutrition standards to all school-affiliated activities and events.

Iowa State University Extension (ISUE)*

www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/
Iowa State University has developed an online assessment tool that reflects the School Health Index and best practices identified by nutrition and physical education professional organizations. This tool can be used to assess and prioritize local school wellness policy initiatives, as well as monitor school progress toward local wellness policy goals. The online assessment is available free of charge at <http://survey.hs.iastate.edu/schoolnutrition/homepage.htm>.

Keys to Excellence

(School Nutrition Association)

www.asfsa.org/keys/

This online self-assessment tool is designed to help schools evaluate their nutrition program. ***Making it Happen: School Nutrition Success Stories***
www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/execsummary_makingithappen.html
Examples from 32 schools demonstrating innovative approaches to improving nutritional quality of foods and beverages.

School Foods Tool Kit

Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)

www.cspinet.org/schoolfoodkit

The Web site offers information on competitive food standards, portion size recommendations, healthy beverage and snack options for vending, healthy fundraising alternatives, talking points, and success stories from schools.

School Health Index*

Centers for Disease Control

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/>

This self-assessment and planning guide is designed to help schools identify the strengths and weaknesses of school policies and programs for promoting health and safety; develop an action plan for improving student health and safety; and involve teachers, parents, students, and the community in improving school policies, programs, and services. It can be completed online, downloaded, or ordered free of charge from the Web site.