

School Wellness Policies

What You Need to Know

Under the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program (nearly all U.S. school districts participate in these programs) are required to develop and implement local school wellness policies that address student nutrition and physical activity issues. According to the law, local wellness policies were to be developed by the beginning of the 2006–2007 school year, when the implementation phase was to begin. Currently, there are no consequences specifically stated in the legislation for districts that do not comply with these requirements, but districts should recognize that implementing a wellness policy is a tangible way to demonstrate concern for and improve students' health.

What Should Be Included in a School Wellness Policy?

- Nutrition education goals
- Physical activity goals
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available on the school campus
- Ways for parents, students, school administrators, the school board, and the school food authority, as well as the general public, to get involved in developing the wellness policy
- Other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness
- Plans for evaluating the school wellness policy

What You Can Do

To learn the status of your school district's wellness policy, contact your district office and ask to speak to the person overseeing the creation of the policy.

- * Find out whether any parents are (or were) involved in the process of creating the policy. If you find that parents are (or were) not involved, work with the school district to find a way for you and other parents to get involved.
- * Find out what the next steps in the district's plan are. What activities are planned for implementation? Does your school or district have a wellness council or another group that will be responsible for implementation? Is the PTA represented?

Where You Can Go

- * Action for Healthy Kids, Wellness Policy Tool, www.ActionForHealthyKids.org/wellnesstool/
- * National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, Model School Wellness Policies, www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org
- * U.S. Department of Agriculture, Team Nutrition, www.teamnutrition.usda.gov