

Steps to Prepare a Local

School Wellness Policy

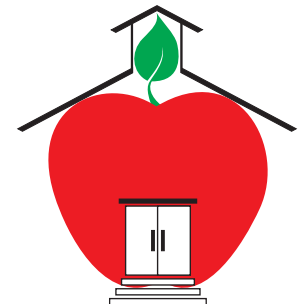
The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265) that President Bush signed on June 30, 2004, requires every school district to produce a local wellness policy that addresses the growing problem of childhood obesity. Information is available at www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy.html.

What are the health risks related to overweight for children and youth?

- National data indicates that during the past three decades, the rate of childhood overweight has increased from 5 percent to more than 15 percent, resulting in an increased incidence of type 2 diabetes and risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
- In North Dakota, a statewide sample of sixth-grade students in 2002 indicated that 16 percent were overweight. Rural students were more likely to be overweight (19 percent) than students in urban areas (12 percent), and boys were more likely to be overweight (18 percent) than girls (14 percent).
- In 2003, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey of high school youth in North Dakota indicated that 9 percent were overweight and 11 percent at risk for overweight.
- Childhood Obesity Fact Sheets are available at www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm.

What is the timeline?

- June 30, 2006 – Deadline for local districts to submit their wellness policies for implementation on the first day of class following June 30, 2006.



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WELLNESS
POLICY**

What must be included?

The minimum requirements include the following:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness
- Nutrition guidelines for all food available on each school campus during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity
- Assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals will meet or exceed the regulations and guidance issued by the secretary of agriculture under the Child Nutrition Act and National School Lunch Act
- A plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy, including designation of one or more people to have 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

What are the steps?

Assemble a local school wellness policy team

Several groups are suggested for representation to determine the local wellness policy:

- parents
- students
- teachers (including K-12, health educators, physical education, family and consumer science educators)
- school food service employees
- school board members
- school administrators
- health-care professionals, including registered dietitians
- community representatives (NDSU Extension educators, business/industry)

Assess the school nutrition/physical activity environment

Initial baseline assessment of the current school nutrition and physical activity environments is required to develop a local school wellness policy. The initial assessment can be used as the baseline to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.

Focus areas for assessment:

- School lunch program menus that meet meal patterns and nutrition standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Foods available on the school campus with the objective of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity: vending; a la carte foods; school stores; concession stands at sporting and academic events; foods offered at parties and social events; foods used for fundraising activities; foods offered as rewards for accomplishments or withheld as punishment
- Timing of recess prior to lunch to increase food consumption, reduce plate waste and improve cafeteria behavior
- Opportunity before, during and after school for increased physical activity with emphasis on development of skills to maintain healthy behaviors for a lifetime

Available resources to assist with local assessment:

- **Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment** from the USDA - www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/kit.html. It provides tools to assess the school nutrition environment and identify areas needing improvement. It includes a checklist, presentations to help create awareness and a guide to local action. Copies are free from the USDA.
- **School Health Index** from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/>. It provides tools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of school policies and programs related to health and safety and to develop plans for improvements. It includes eight modules with separate editions for elementary

and middle/high schools. It can be downloaded from the CDC's Web site. Mail orders can be sent to: Healthy Youth, P.O. Box 8817, Silver Spring, MD 20907, phone: (888) 231-6405, fax: (888) 282-7681

- **School Foods Tool Kit** from the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) - www.cspinet.org/schoolfood/index.html. It provides tools to improve school foods and beverages; model materials and policies; and examples from other states and communities about improvement of school foods. Other resources include a vending survey tool; healthy beverage and snack options for vending; competitive food standards; alternatives to using food as a classroom reward; revenue issues related to school foods; healthy fundraising alternatives; and success stories from schools.

- **Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)** - www.actionforhealthykids.org. It provides state profiles related to improving the health and educational performance of children through better nutrition and physical activity in schools: school demographics; health behaviors and risks; participation in school food programs; related legislation; policies on school food and physical education/activity; national/state standards and graduation requirements; and links to state agencies. Guidance and direction are provided by more than 40 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, physical activity and nutrition, and teams from all 50 states.

Develop the local school wellness policy

Resources available to assist with the development of the local school wellness policy based on needs identified with the initial assessment:

- **Model School Wellness Policies** from the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity - www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/. It provides wording for wellness policies related to a variety of issues: foods served in the national school lunch program; foods and beverages sold individually through various venues, such as vending, a la carte, fundraisers and school stores; promoting nutrition and physical activity education and positive behaviors; and monitoring and policy review.

- **Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn** - National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) - www.nasbe.org/HealthySchools/index.html.

It includes general school health policies, plus policies to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

- **Grand Forks Public Schools Nutrition Policy**- The Grand Forks Public Schools (N.D.) - www.gfschools.org

- **Valley City School Wellness Policy** - Valley City (N.D.) Public School District No. 2 - www.healthyheartprogram.com/main.htm.

The Valley City school nutrition policy, including a la carte and fundraising standards for the district.

Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the local school wellness policy

The minimum requirements include the designation of one or more people to implement the policy and later evaluate the effectiveness of the policy. The initial assessment of the school nutrition and physical activity environments can be used as the baseline to determine the effectiveness of the policy. School health councils can be useful in the process of implementation and evaluation.

- **School Health Councils** - www.nsba.org (Onsite search for school health councils). School health councils consist of a core group of educators, health professionals, community representatives and students who work to advise the school system on its health curriculum and environment.

Additional Resources

- **North Dakota State University Extension Web page on Local School Wellness Policy** - www.ag.ndsu.edu/k12wellpolicy.htm.

This Web site includes additional resources to assist with the development of local school wellness policies.

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