



Action for Healthy Kids®

Seven Steps to Successful School Wellness Policies

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Introduction

School districts across the country recognize that healthy eating behaviors and regular physical activity are essential for students to achieve their full academic and life potential. Wellness policies promote life-long wellness behaviors, and link healthy nutrition and exercise to students' overall physical well-being. The AFHK Wellness Policy Tool was designed to help you create a local wellness policy that meets your district's unique goals for nutrition and physical activity *and* take the next steps to put the policy into action to positively impact students' health and lifelong choices.

In June 2004, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act was signed into law, making it mandatory for all local education agencies participating in the Federal School Meal Programs to create a local wellness policy by July 2006. Wellness policies requirements were reaffirmed and strengthened with the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 outlining the new guidelines for the local school wellness policies. The AFHK wellness policy tool is intended to help anyone involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating wellness policies by providing practical guidance and how-to information about the wellness policy process.

Step 7: Local Education Agencies are required to measure periodically and make available to the public an assessment on the implementation of the wellness policy. This includes the extent to which schools are in compliance, the extent to which the district policy compares to model policy, and to describe the progress made in attaining goals of policy. Consider:

- How can you tell your district's story?
- What can you tell parents/community members/students/staff/local media about your district's health/nutrition/physical activity and school environment?
- What did the wellness committee work on last year?
- Have you reviewed the HUSC Criteria for Excellence, and are there successes to share?

Step 6: How will your district know that the wellness policy is making a difference? Are you doing what you planned to do in your action plan? Consider:

- What are you measuring?
- Does your wellness plan include SMART objectives?
- What changed in the past year in your district?
- How many school stakeholders participated in events and programs?
- Did you do what you planned to do?
- How often does the wellness committee review the policy and plan?

Step 5: Once the policy has been adopted, the district and each school must put the policy and procedures into action to truly impact school wellness practices. Consider:

- Does your district have an action plan for wellness policy implementation?
- How are stakeholders involved in policy implementation?
- What are the district wellness goals for the next year?
- Who is responsible for wellness activities? Policy enforcement? Communication to staff, parents and students?
- Are school improvement plans used in your district? Do they include wellness goals?
- Is it possible to benchmark against state/national recognition (i.e. HUSC criteria)?

Step 1: Enhancing the membership in the wellness team is the first step in developing and revising a local wellness policy. Build support from the start with a diverse group of people, representing the different facets of your district. Consider:

- Does the team reflect all stakeholders who are impacted by and have input into the outcome of the policy? This includes food service personnel, principals, PE/ health teachers, school nurses, the school board, parent groups, extra-curricular staff/coaches, students, and community members.
- Are there representatives with recognized expertise and knowledge about nutrition, physical fitness, student health and wellness?
- Who is the designee for the district wellness committee or school health council? Do they have the authority to implement and enforce the policy?

Step 2: Determine what aspects of your district's current policies and practices concerning nutrition, physical activity, and nutrition education are working, and what needs to be improved. The goal is to understand what you need to do, why you need to make revisions, and how to update the policy effectively. Consider:

- Has your district assessed the school environment?
- What data is collected already in your district? Can any of this information be related to health and wellness, such as attendance, physical education minutes, and behavioral referrals?
- Is your district ready to pursue state/national recognition?

Step 3: Review your Local Wellness Policy to meet the requirements of the HHFKA. Policies reflect the "rules" governing the implementation of the school district processes, and this is where the district goals and expectations will be stated. The corresponding procedures outline all the details for implementation. Consider:

- What is the policy process in your district?
- What federal and state regulations are met (or exceeded) with district policy?
- Is the policy clearly written and unfamiliar terms defined?
- What outcomes are expected by the policy?

Step 4: Once the policy is drafted or revised with the support of key stakeholders, the team faces the challenge of getting the school board or other governing body to approve it. Consider:

- What is the policy adoption process in your district?
- What is the timeline to get the policy reviewed and on the board's agenda?
- What is the plan for policy enforcement? How are other policies enforced?
- Does the district wellness policy impact other policies?
- Are there any costs related to the policy being adopted?
- What are the benefits to adopting this policy?

