Local School Wellness Policies

Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) that participate in federal child nutrition programs are required to adopt and implement local school wellness policies (LSWP). The requirements for these policies have been set forth in two federal laws – originally in the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children’s (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 and then reauthorized and expanded in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010.

Numerous resources exist to help school districts develop their policies, engage local communities, and assess impacts of school wellness policies. Many districts in California have fully embraced the process of developing, implementing and evaluating LSWPs in order to improve their students’ health and well-being and boost academic performance – the original and ongoing intention of the federal laws (see Table 1, next page).

Federal Laws

*The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004* required LEAs that accept federal funding for child nutrition programs to establish LSWPs by the first day of the 2006-07 school year. View the legislation.

The 2004 Act established five mandates, requiring that LSWPs at a minimum:

**Goals**

1) Include goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities that the LEA has determined will promote student wellness.

**Meal Guidelines**

2) Include nutrition guidelines selected by the LEA for all foods available on each school campus during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.

3) Assure that guidelines for reimbursable school meals establish a minimum standard for all foods available on each school campus.

**Evaluation & Operational Oversight**

4) Establish a plan to evaluate implementation of the LSWP, and designate at least one person who will have operational responsibility to ensure that the school(s) meet the LSWP objectives.

**Community Engagement**

5) Involve parents, students, food service directors and staff, school board members and administrators, and the public in the development of the LSWP.
The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) Act of 2010 reauthorized the federal Child Nutrition Programs and expanded requirements for LSWPs, effective October 1, 2010. [View the legislation.]

LEAs must update their LSWPs to meet these additional requirements:

**Compliance**
- Designate one or more school officials as appropriate to ensure that each school complies with the LSWP.

**Nutrition Promotion**
- Set goals for nutrition promotion.

**Partner Engagement in Implementation**
- Expand partners to include, at minimum, physical education teachers and school health professionals.
- Engage partners in the implementation of the LSWP and provide periodic review and updates.

**Public Education**
- Inform and update the public about the content and implementation of the LSWPs.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommended that LEAs review their LSWPs during the 2011-2012 school year and, to the extent practical, begin to implement the new requirements. In Fall 2012, FNS will issue proposed guidelines, which will be available for public review and comment before being finalized.

Table 2 on the following page provides a checklist for LEAs that summarizes requirements established in the two federal laws.

Table 3 on pages 4 and 5 provides a list of resources on LSWPs.

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**Table 1:**
**Wellness & Academic Performance**

A 2011 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* provides compelling evidence of the linkages between student health and academic success.

Key findings include:

- Student health is strongly correlated with academic success, and student success in school is strongly linked with their health.
- Eating healthfully (including a healthy breakfast) enhances the health and well-being of school-aged children. Healthy breakfasts may enhance cognitive ability, increase school attendance, improve psychosocial skills, and enhance academic performance.
- There is substantial evidence that physical activity can help improve students’ grades and scores on standardized tests.
- Increasing time for physical education (PE) may help — and does not have an adverse effect — on academic performance.

*From Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. Recommendations and Reports. September 16, 2011 / 60(RR05). Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6005a1.htm?s_cid=rr6005a1_w
Table 2: Checklist of Elements Required in Local School Wellness Policies*

**Black Type – Requirements originally established in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, 2004**  
*Italicized, Blue Type – New Requirements established in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*

### General
- Does your LEA have a LSWP in place for each school under your jurisdiction?  
- **Does the LSWP have rules for public input, transparency, and implementation?**

### Elements of the Local School Wellness Policy
- Does the LSWP include, at a minimum, goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities to promote student wellness, as well as nutrition guidelines for all foods available on school campuses?  
- **Does the LSWP also include goals for nutrition promotion?**

### Stakeholder Involvement
- Has your LEA involved parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public in the development of your LSWP?  
- **Has your LEA also allowed PE teachers and school health professionals to participate in the development of your LSWP?**

### Stakeholder Participation in Implementation, Review & Update
- Has your LEA allowed parents, students, PE teachers, school health professionals, and representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public to participate in the implementation and periodic review and update of the LSWP?  

### Local Discretion
- Has your LEA determined specific policies that are appropriate for the schools under your jurisdiction, and ensured that those policies include all required elements specified in federal law?

### Public Notification
- Does your LEA have protocols in place to inform and update the public (including parents, students, and others in the community) about the content and implementation of the LSWP?  

### Measuring Implementation
- Does your LEA have a plan for measuring implementation of the LSWP?  
- **Has your LEA periodically measured implementation of the LSWP?**  
  - Does the assessment measure the extent to which:  
    - schools are in compliance with the LSWP?  
    - the LSWP compares to model LSWP?  
  - Does the assessment describe progress made in attaining goals of the LSWP?  
  - Has the assessment been made available to the public?

### Designating Local Responsibility for Operation & Compliance
- Does your LEA designate one or more persons within the LEA or at each school to have operational responsibility for ensuring that schools meet the goals and objectives outlined in the LSWP?  
- **Does your LEA designate one or more LEA officials or school officials to ensure that each school complies with the LSWP?**

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### Table 3: Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP) Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Wellness Web Page (when available)</th>
<th>Notes on Resources</th>
<th>Highlighted Resources (with link if available)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California School Boards Association (CSBA)</td>
<td>CSBA School Wellness Page</td>
<td>Offers a model policy, a workbook for school board members, community engagement resources, and tools for evaluation.</td>
<td>• Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide (available December 2012 at the <a href="http://www.csba.org/wellness.aspx">CSBA Wellness Resource List</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSBA School Wellness Page</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sample Wellness Policy (Revised 7/11)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.csba.org/wellness.aspx">http://www.csba.org/wellness.aspx</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Action for Healthy Kids</td>
<td>AFHK School Wellness Page</td>
<td>An 8-Step Wellness Policy Tool offers resources for research, community engagement, policy development, implementation &amp; evaluation.</td>
<td>• 8-Step Wellness Policy Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Project Lean (CPL)</td>
<td>CPL Wellness Page</td>
<td>Offers thorough resources to develop policy, conduct outreach, and educate stakeholders.</td>
<td>• Policy in Action: A Guide to Implementing Your Local School Wellness Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.californiaprojectlean.org">www.californiaprojectlean.org</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/doc.asp?id=168">www.californiaprojectlean.org/doc.asp?id=168</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>See <a href="http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/doc.asp?id=168">CPL Wellness Page</a> for following documents in both English &amp; Spanish:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Parents in Action: A Guide to Engaging Parents in Local School Wellness Policy</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Parent Lesson Plans</td>
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<td>• Fact Sheets</td>
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<tr>
<td>California Department of Education (CDE)</td>
<td>CDE Wellness Page</td>
<td>Offers summary of local school wellness policy requirements, education content standards and links to other agency resources.</td>
<td>• Education Content Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy Council of California (DCC)</td>
<td>DCC Wellness Page</td>
<td>Maintains a list of LSWPs in California.</td>
<td>• School Wellness Policy Directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.dairycouncilofca.org">www.dairycouncilofca.org</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/Educators/School-Wellness/">http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/Educators/School-Wellness/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>ChangeLab Solutions (formerly Public Health Law &amp; Policy)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.changelabsolutions.org">www.changelabsolutions.org</a></td>
<td>Offers guidelines for parents and community activists to ensure that their district’s wellness policy is enforced.</td>
<td>• How to Enforce a Wellness Policy: A Guide for Parents and Community Advocates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>UC Davis Center for Nutrition in Schools (CNS)</td>
<td><a href="http://cns.ucdavis.edu">CNS Wellness Page</a></td>
<td>Offers an evaluation tool to help school districts quickly evaluate LSWP implementation, parent involvement and more.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://cns.ucdavis.edu/resources/wellness/index.cfm">School and Community Actions for Nutrition (SCAN) Survey</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provides succinct literature review and guidelines to promote healthy eating and physical activity in schools.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.cdc.gov">School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Resource Action Center (FRAC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Offers resources that emphasize outreach and opportunities to serve low-income students.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.frac.org">School Wellness Policy and Practice: Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Students</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/default.aspx">Network for a Healthy California, California Department of Public Health</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Network, its 11 Regional Networks and their Regional Collaboratives offer a host of nutrition education resources to promote healthy eating, active living and food security for low-income Californians.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/default.aspx">Harvest of the Month</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/RegionalNetworks.aspx">ReThink Your Drink Education Campaign</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Offers a free, on-line tool to assess quality of LSWPs.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://yaleruddcenter.org">WellSAT: Wellness School Assessment Tool</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOR MORE INFORMATION

This key issue on Local School Wellness Policies is a component of Understanding Nutrition: A Primer on Programs and Policies in California. Go to www.ccrwf.org to access additional modules.

The primer was produced by the California Center for Research on Women and Families (CCRWF), in partnership with California Food Policy Advocates and the California Department of Public Health’s Network for a Healthy California (Network), a public health effort working with hundreds of partners and organizations to empower low-income Californians to live healthier lives through good nutrition and physical activity.

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RECOMMENDED CITATION


LSWP WEBINAR

Local School Wellness Policies is a featured publication in a webinar co-hosted by the California School Boards Association, the California Department of Education, California Project LEAN and CCRWF.

To access the webinar, go to the CSBA website at: http://www.csba.org/en/~/link.aspx?_id=725D631AF1B34AC8BE3E93DCF9C875B5&_z=z.

END NOTE

1 LEAs include local school districts and county offices of education.