

FACT SHEET

CALIFORNIA'S NUTRITION STANDARDS

What are Nutrition Standards?

Nutrition standards regulate which “competitive” (also called “a la carte”) foods and beverages can be sold to students. Competitive foods are items (main entrees and side dishes), snacks, and beverages that students can buy apart from the school breakfast and lunch program. Competitive foods may be sold in the cafeteria, vending machines, snack bars, concession stands, and school stores, and include foods sold through fundraisers or provided to students for classroom parties. California’s nutrition standards—Senate Bills (SB) 12 and 965 (2005)—apply to the entire school day and one-half hour before and after school. Elementary school nutrition standards are stricter than those for middle/junior and high schools.

Competitive foods are often high in calories, fat, salt, and sugar. Students frequently choose these foods instead of the school breakfast or lunch, which are usually more balanced and lower in fat.

What are the Challenges to California’s Nutrition Standards?

- ❖ Schools may not comply with the law regarding foods and beverages sold and served.
- ❖ Schools may not have a system in place to monitor the implementation of the nutrition standards.
- ❖ Non-compliant foods and beverages may be sold by students, teachers, parent groups, and other school groups for fundraising.
- ❖ Vendors stock non-compliant foods and beverages in vending machines.
- ❖ Street vendors sell unhealthy foods and beverages to students just outside school campuses.
- ❖ By restricting the sale of competitive foods, schools may reduce fundraising revenue, which often goes to extra-curricular activities such as sports or band.



What are Nutrition Standards?

Nutrition standards are meant to ensure that students have access to healthier foods and beverages by limiting fat, sugar, and calories, and the types of products that can be offered in schools. Districts may set stricter standards than the law in their local school wellness policy (LSWP).



What is the Ideal Situation?

- ❖ Limited or no competitive foods or beverages are sold to students.
- ❖ Offer only the school breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria and ensure that these are comprised of healthy food choices.
- ❖ Students, teachers, and school administrators understand and follow the nutrition standards.
- ❖ Districts and schools set stricter standards than the law (perhaps lower fat standards or standards for sodium).
- ❖ Parents are actively involved in supporting the nutrition standards.
- ❖ Students are offered only foods and beverages that contribute to their health.
- ❖ Rules pertaining to street vendors are enforced (for example, in some cities, they need to be 500 feet away from the school).

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What nutrition standards does your LSWP have?

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What Can Parents Do?

- ❖ Learn about the laws addressing foods and beverages sold in schools.
- ❖ Learn about your district's LSWP.
- ❖ Talk with other parents about the laws and wellness policies.
- ❖ Find out who is in charge of the school's food service and wellness policy and who is responsible for monitoring nutrition standards.
- ❖ Get to know who can make decisions and let them know about your interest and concerns.
- ❖ Find out what competitive foods and beverages are being sold at your child's school.
- ❖ Talk with the principal, food service director, associated student body director, and teachers to find out how nutrition standards and LSWPs are monitored.
- ❖ Ask to serve on the school's council or committee that is responsible for wellness policies and foods served.

Additional Resources

Food Standards Calculator,
California Project LEAN

Tools and information on California's nutrition standards for elementary and middle/high schools, along with a calculator to determine if food items meet the standards.

www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org/calculator/

SB 12 and SB 965 Summaries,
California Project LEAN

Information that summarizes the requirements of SB 12 and SB 965.

www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org