

Chapter 25: Local Wellness Policy & Smart Snacks

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Overview of a Healthy School Environment

A healthy school environment gives students consistent reliable health information and ample opportunity to use it. In a healthy environment:

- The classroom, the school dining room, and other school activities provide clear and consistent messages that explain and reinforce healthy eating and physical activity habits.
- Students learn to make healthy lifestyle choices throughout the day.
- Students have many opportunities to practice healthy habits.

Why Is a Healthy School Environment Important?

Recent trends in childhood obesity and the health consequences of those trends make it more important than ever to provide a healthy school environment. If obesity trends continue to increase among school age children, this could be the first generation of children who do not outlive their parents. Recent trends show that obesity increased in adults and youth from 1999–2016. The prevalence of obesity in the United States remains higher than the Healthy People 2020 goals of 14.5% among youth and 30.5% among adults.

Table 1 shows the prevalence of obesity over four decades among children 2-19 years old. Obesity rate has increased in all age groups with the highest increase observed among school age children 6 – 19 years old.

| Table 1: Prevalence of Obesity among US Age Groups over Four Decades | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1976-1980 | 2003-2006 | 2013-2016 |
| 2-5 years old | 5.0 % | 12.4 % | 13.9% |
| 6-11 years old | 6.5 % | 17.0 % | 18.4% |
| 12-19 years old | 5.0 % | 17.7 % | 20.6% |

Health Consequences of Obesity

Obesity is associated with serious health risks and can have harmful effects on the body in a variety of ways. Obese children and adolescents have a greater risk of social and psychological problems, such as discrimination and poor self-esteem, which can continue into adulthood. For more information visit www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood.

Obese children are more likely to have:

- High blood pressure and high cholesterol, which are risk factors for heart disease
- Increased risk of impaired glucose tolerance, insulin resistance and type II diabetes.
- Breathing problems, such as sleep apnea, and asthma.
- Joint problems and musculoskeletal discomfort.
- Fatty liver disease, gallstones, and gastro-esophageal reflux (i.e., heartburn)

Local Wellness Policies

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 required all districts to establish local school wellness policies by School Year 2006-2007.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010 expanded the scope of wellness policies; brought in additional stakeholders in its development, implementation and review; and required public updates on the content and implementation of the wellness policies. The intent is to strengthen local school wellness policies so they become useful tools in evaluating, establishing, and maintaining healthy school environments, and to provide transparency to the public on key areas that affect the nutrition environment in each school. A free Local Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit is available for download at: <http://TeamNutrition.usda.gov>.

Wellness Policy Requirements

At a minimum, a local school wellness policy must:

- Include goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. Districts are required to review and consider evidence-based strategies in determining these goals.
- Include standards and nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages sold to students on the school campus during the school day that are consistent with Federal regulations for school meal nutrition standards, and the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
- Permit participation by the general public and the school community (including parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, the school board, school administrators, and the general public.
- Develop standards for all foods and beverages provided, but not sold, to students during the school day (e.g., in classroom parties, classroom snacks brought by parents, or other foods given as incentives).
- Create policies for food and beverage marketing that allow marketing and advertising of only those foods and beverages that meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
- Describe public involvement, public updates, policy leadership, and evaluation plan.
- Establish leadership of one or more LEA and/or school official(s) who have the authority and responsibility to ensure each school complies with the policy.

- Conduct an assessment of the wellness policy every three years, at a minimum. This assessment will determine:
 - compliance with the wellness policy,
 - How the wellness policy compares to model wellness policies, and
 - Progress made in attaining the goals of the wellness policy.
- Maintain records to include:
 - a copy of the current wellness policy;
 - documentation on how the policy and assessment are made available to the public;
 - the most recent assessment of implementation of the policy, and
 - documentation of efforts to review and update the policy, including who was involved in the process and how stakeholders were made aware of the ability to participate.

Additional Requirements

Menu planning requirements are described in the Menu Planning chapter of this manual and the regulations on competitive foods in all public and charter schools in South Carolina are provided in the “Student Health and Fitness Act of 2005.” Private and parochial schools and residential childcare institutions are encouraged to follow these regulations.

Monitoring Wellness Policies

Monitoring for Local School Wellness Policies falls under the General Areas of the Administrative Review. The scope of monitoring may require the SA to assess how unit(s) of the local educational agency other than the school food service implement their Local School Wellness Policy responsibilities. See the Administrative Review (AR) chapter for additional information.

Student Health and Fitness Act of 2005

1. School Meals

- School meals should be made attractive to students by appealing to their taste preferences and meeting their cultural needs. Therefore, elementary schools must:
 - Offer at least two entrée choices at lunch (one choice may be an entrée salad).
 - Encourage input regarding the selection of food items to be offered in the school meal programs by promoting and encouraging student and parent participation in taste-testing events, in menu-review panels, and in online recipe reviewing.
 - Require that school cafeteria managers meet with student advisory committees in grades four through five a minimum of twice each year.
 - Allow students to purchase at à la carte prices additional servings of any food item that is part of a reimbursable school meal (serving sizes should be comparable to those of the meal components).
- School meals should not only provide the optimal nutrition that students need for growth, development and academic achievement but should also support the development of

healthful eating behaviors in students, including their learning to eat a variety of foods. Therefore, school districts must:

- Offer a low-fat meal choice (30 percent or less of calories from fat) at every meal.
- Provide low-fat and nonfat salad dressings.
- Provide information on calories, percentages of fat, and serving sizes of school meal items to help children select appropriate portions of food.
- Offer a minimum of four choices of fruits and vegetables daily, including fresh fruits and vegetables in season. Salad bars or prepackaged salads may be included. Students can take two to four servings based on the school district's discretion.
- Encourage students to try a variety of foods by serving the full reimbursable meal

School Food Service Meals and Competitive Foods

Competitive food means all food and beverages other than meals reimbursed under programs authorized by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 available for sale to students on the School campus during the School day. These items are called “**competitive foods**” because they can compete with participation in school meal programs. This definition includes, but is not limited to, food and/or beverages sold a la carte in a meal service line, in vending machines, in school stores, or as part of fundraisers.

Smart Snacks in School refers to the national nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold outside of the federal reimbursable school meal programs during the school day. For more information see <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/smart-snacks-school>.

Competitive Food Nutrition Standards

The Competitive Food Nutrition Standards guidance in this section applies to all SFAs operating the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) in which food and/or beverage items are sold to students during the school day on a school campus that are not part of a reimbursable meal. The Competitive Food Nutrition Standards are also called Smart Snacks or the competitive rule.

Four Competitive Food Nutrition Standards

SFAs that sell food and/or beverages that are not part of a reimbursable meal during the school day on the school campus—*competitive foods*—must use the following Competitive Food Nutrition Standards.

- **Beverage Standards for Competitive Foods (Beverage Standards):** A set of criteria that establish beverage types, sizes, and nutrient values to ensure that students are able to purchase healthy beverages.
- **General Food Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods (General Food Nutrition Standards):** A set of general characteristics for food items sold—type of food item and nutritional values for the food item—that determine if a food item is allowable as a competitive food.
- **Nutrient Standards for Competitive Foods (Nutrient Standards):** A set of nutritional values for calories, saturated or trans fats, sodium, and sugar that determine if food items can be sold under the competitive rule.

- **Criteria for Competitive Foods:** A set of criteria that establish the Competitive Food Nutrition Standards for entrée items.

Fundraisers

A fundraiser is an event that includes any activity during which currency, tokens, tickets, donation for, or other forms of payment are exchanged for the sale or purchase of a product. This includes payment that is made toward a future purchase. There is no limit on fundraisers that meet the Competitive Food Nutrition Standards. Any food and/or beverage item that meets the Smart Snack standards may be sold on the school campus during the school day. SFAs should define what types of food and/or beverages are allowed to be sold on campus based on the LWP.

Exempt Fundraisers

During the school day South Carolina public, charter, and private schools that participate in NSLP or SBP may sell food and/or beverages that do not meet the Competitive Food Nutrition Standards as part an exempt fundraiser. The school may have up to thirty (30) exempt fundraisers, not to exceed 1 day in length. For more guidance pertaining to [exempt fundraisers](#) click on the link to see the memo. SFAs should include information on exempt fundraisers in their local wellness policies to ensure that students, parents, and staff understand when fundraising exemptions apply. For more information on smart snacks and competitive foods, please see the [FNS website](#).

When Competitive Food Nutrition Standards Apply

The Competitive Food Nutrition Standards apply only to food and/or beverages sold during the school day on the school campus. SFAs may establish local policies or rules that are more restrictive than South Carolina or USDA regulations as long as those policies and rules are not in conflict with South Carolina or USDA regulations

Exempt fundraiser foods or beverages may not be sold in competition with school meals in the food service area during the meal service.

At a minimum, all competitive food sold to students on the school campus during the school day must meet the Smart Snacks nutrition standards below. These standards apply to all items packaged and served to students. To be allowable, a competitive food item must meet all of the Smart Snacks nutrient standards outlined in this section;

- (i) Be a grain product that contains 50 percent or more whole grains by weight or have as the first ingredient a whole grain;
- (ii) Have as the first ingredient one of the non-grain major food groups: fruits, vegetables, dairy or protein foods (meat, beans, poultry, seafood, eggs, nuts, seeds, etc.);
- (iii) Be a combination food that contains 1/4 cup of fruit and/or vegetable;
- (iv) If water is the first ingredient, the second ingredient must be one of the food items identified above in (i), (ii), or (iii).

Any entrée item offered as part of the lunch program or the breakfast program is exempt from all competitive food standards if it is offered as a competitive food on the day of, or the school day after, it is offered in the lunch or breakfast program. Exempt entrée items offered as a competitive food must be offered in the same or smaller portion sizes as in

the lunch or breakfast program. Side dishes offered as part of the lunch or breakfast program and served à la carte must meet the nutrition standards in this section.

Grain products. Grain products acceptable as a competitive food must include 50 percent or more whole grains by weight or have whole grain as the first ingredient.

Total fat and saturated fat. The total fat content of a competitive food must be not more than 35 percent of total calories from fat per item as packaged or served. The saturated fat content of a competitive food must be less than 10 percent of total calories per item as packaged or served, (Trans **fat.** The trans-fat content of a competitive food must be zero grams trans-fat per portion as packaged or served (not more than 0.5 grams per portion).

Total sugars. The total sugar content of a competitive food must be not more than 35 percent of weight per item as packaged or served.

Calorie and sodium content for snack items and side dishes sold as competitive foods. Snack items and side dishes sold as competitive foods must have not more than 200 calories and 200 mg of sodium per item as packaged or served, including the calories and sodium contained in any added accompaniments such as butter, cream cheese, salad dressing, etc., and must meet all of the other nutrient standards in this section.

Caffeine. Foods and beverages available to elementary and middle school-aged students must be caffeine-free, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine substances. Foods and beverages available to high school-aged students may contain caffeine.

Beverages.

1. Elementary schools. Allowable beverages for elementary school-aged students are: Plain water or plain carbonated water (no size limit); Low fat milk, unflavored (no more than 8 fluid ounces); Nonfat milk, flavored or unflavored (no more than 8 fluid ounces and 100 percent fruit/vegetable juice, and 100 percent fruit and/or vegetable juice diluted with water (with or without carbonation and with no added sweeteners) (no more than 8 fluid ounces).
2. Middle schools. Allowable beverages for middle school-aged students are: Plain water or plain carbonated water (no size limit); Low fat milk, unflavored (no more than 12 fluid ounces); Nonfat milk, flavored or unflavored (no more than 12 fluid ounces); and 100 percent fruit/vegetable juice, and 100 percent fruit and/or vegetable juice diluted with water (with or without carbonation and with no added sweeteners) (no more than 12 fluid ounces).
3. High schools. Allowable beverages for high school-aged students are: Plain water or plain carbonated water (no size limit); Low fat milk, unflavored (no more than 12 fluid ounces); Nonfat milk, flavored or unflavored (no more than 12 fluid ounces); 100 percent fruit/vegetable juice, and 100 percent fruit and/or vegetable juice diluted with water (with or without carbonation and with no added sweeteners) (no more than 12 fluid ounces); Calorie-free, flavored water, with or without carbonation (no more than 20 fluid ounces); Other beverages that are labeled to contain less than 5 calories per 8 fluid ounces, or less than or equal to 10 calories per 20 fluid ounces (no more than 20 fluid ounces); and

Other beverages that are labeled to contain no more than 40 calories per 8 fluid ounces or 60 calories per 12 fluid ounces (no more than 12 fluid ounces).

Strategies and Tips to meet the Local Wellness Policy Requirements

Assess Current Activities

The type of parent and student involvement is left to the discretion of the individual LEA. This gives the schools flexibility to plan and implement a program to meet its individual needs. Before designing a program of student and parent involvement, identify existing activities. Are any of the following or similar activities currently being conducted in your school?

- Are menus distributed to students and sent home to parents?
- Are student and/or parent advisory committees participating in planning Child Nutrition Program (CNP) activities?
- Do CNP personnel speak at parent, teacher, student and/or school board meetings?
- Are surveys conducted to determine students' food preferences?
- Is nutrition education taught in the classroom?
- Is the CNP department used as a “learning laboratory” to supplement classroom instruction?

Determine Needs

Determine if current activities are adequate to involve students and parents in the CNP or if additional activities should be planned. It may be helpful to form a committee of interested parties to assist in assessing the need and planning future actions.

Collect Resources

There are many resources available for parent and student involvement activities. For a more complete list, see the Resources Chapter in this *Program Reference Manual*. Some resources that may be of specific interest include the following:

Student, parent and other school and community organizations

- Parent-Teacher Organization
- Student Council
- Student Government Association
- Site Council
- Rotary Club
- Lions Club
- School Improvement Council
- C-SHACs
- **School and community health and nutrition professionals**
 - School nurse
 - Registered Dietitian
 - Food and Consumer Science Extension Agents
 - Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) or county health departments

- Expanded Food and Nutrition Extension Program (EFNEP) Agents and (Cooperative Extension Agents)
- **Media**
 - School newspapers and websites
 - Local radio and TV stations
 - Local newspapers

Plan for Involvement

Establish objectives and goals for a program to promote student and parent involvement that are realistic and consistent with the identified needs. The plan of action should be designed to use existing resources and meet the established goals and objectives. The plan could include:

- Description of activities to be performed;
- List of resources needed to carry out the activities;
- Description of how to use existing resources;
- Timetable for implementing each activity;
- Person(s) responsible for each activity; and/or
- Evaluation procedures to determine the effectiveness of the activities.

In order to effectively implement a program of student and parent involvement, it is essential to:

- Establish communication with all groups who will be affected and/or directly involved;
- Present the plan to these groups; and
- Gain approval and support.

The approval and support of local school officials are vital to an effective program of student and parent involvement. The attitudes and acceptance of the CNP by local school administrators often have a direct impact on students' and parents' attitudes.

1. Provide program information in student and parent handbooks or other school enrollment materials.
2. Design creative menus to post in the school and distribute to parents and students. Advertise the day's menu on an attractive menu board. Print menus in the school or local newspaper and include on the school website.
3. Celebrate special occasions with special menus. Examples include holiday meals, ethnic meals, National School Lunch Week, National School Breakfast Week, athletic victories, etc. Coordinate ethnic meals with language studies, social studies, and/or history classes. Have students participate by decorating the dining area, designing costumes, providing music, etc.
4. Invite parents, grandparents, business partners, or other people in the community to have lunch at school.

5. Write news items for the school and local newspapers, highlighting a nutrition education item for the week or month, or assist students in writing such articles.
6. Supply weekly or monthly news bulletins to parents on the school menus, suggestions for home meals, recipes, marketing and nutritional tips. These bulletins could be placed in local newspapers or printed on the back of lunch menus sent home to parents.
7. Conduct guided tours of the kitchen and serving area for students and parents.
8. Allow classes to plan menus. Before the menu is planned, visit the classroom to discuss requirements and good nutrition principles.
9. Discuss nutrition in the classroom. Plan to evaluate one week's cafeteria menus to determine if they meet the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020*. Evaluate the menus as to variety, texture and color.
10. Form a parent advisory committee from within the local Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) to discuss topics such as school nutrition regulations, budgets, food allergies, breakfast in the classroom, the commodity program, school wellness policy, ways of increasing participation, alternate menu items and possible menu changes.
11. Use the child nutrition program as a learning laboratory for science classes in relation to food and food handling.
12. Invite a guest speaker, such as a local health professional, to speak to the student body on nutrition and health.
13. Conduct taste-testing events to evaluate new products and recipes. Students, parents and teachers could serve on the taste-test panel.
14. Invite students or parents to complete a food preference questionnaire to determine their likes and dislikes.

Nutrition Advisory Council (NAC) Involvement

1. Menu Planning – Provide a worksheet and help your student advisors plan menus that reflect the dietary guidelines and new SLP/SPB meal patterns. Be sure to recognize student input by printing their names on the menus or posting them in the dining area.
2. Taste Testing – Have NAC members taste test new products from vendors, school-made products and fresh fruits and vegetables. Discuss the nutritional contribution of the food. Ask for their advice on how to prepare the food and on how to introduce them to the other students.
3. Marketing – Let NAC members develop a marketing campaign for the year, decorate bulletin boards, make announcements over the school PA system, develop advertisements and/or posters, and then evaluate their efforts.
4. Customer Survey – Work with NAC members to develop and conduct a survey. Students may be more likely to complete a questionnaire if conducted by their peers. Ask teachers to encourage and collect responses.

Rewards for NAC Members

NAC student advisors not only gain new skills but often find their work fun. Still, it's important to reward them in tangible ways. Such recognition keeps commitment high. Here are a few popular ideas.

- Publicity – Everyone likes to see their name in print. List the names of NAC members in school newsletters, local newspapers, on menus, bulletin boards, etc. Print nametags for members to wear at meetings and at an Open House. Present certificates of appreciation at a board meeting.
- Special Identification – Reward group members with logo items such as T-shirts, water bottles, visors, note pads, etc. Limit distribution so they remain “special” and encourage their use as a sign of distinction. Give as “welcome aboard” items or as thank you gifts.
- Food – Provide healthy snacks at meetings and offer taste tests.

How to Develop a Food Preference Survey?

Design the Survey

- Identify the topics on which you want the students' opinions. Possibilities include the variety of food offered, quality of food, attractiveness of food on the serving line, friendliness of servers and atmosphere in the cafeteria.
- Phrase questions carefully to avoid prompting either a positive or negative response.
- Use a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions.
- Ask the students to identify their age, gender and whether they do or do not regularly participate in the CNP in question (i.e. breakfast, lunch, snack, etc.)

- Ask for opinions on only those things that the program is willing to change or implement. For example, do not ask students if they want a particular food available daily if it is not a realistic possibility.

Administer the Survey

- If necessary, secure approval and support from administrators, teachers and parents.
- Select the most appropriate setting by asking yourself which will reach the broadest group of students and encourage them to take the survey seriously.
- Consider the month, day and time that the survey is to be administered.

Collect and Combine the Results

Get help if possible. Some SFAs have equipment available to scan computer surveys. Consider asking a math or science class or the NAC to combine the results as part of a project. Have students interpret the results and make recommendations for solving any problems that they identify.

Share the Results

Report the results to the students so that they know you heard them. Let them know what you plan to do with the new information.

Plan for Improvement

- Meet with the CNP staff and administrators if appropriate to plan a few changes.
- Make changes gradually.
- Tell the students when you make a change that they recommended just in case they don't notice.

A sample customer satisfaction survey for middle and high school students is located in the appendix. The Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) also has a variety of surveys available at reduced prices. Access information at <https://Theicn.org>

The form located in the appendix titled, “Documentation of Activities for Parent/Student Involvement & Nutrition Education” or an alternate method of your choice may be used to document activities each year. Make additional copies of the form as needed and keep the forms on file. Review the success of current activities when planning future activities.

References/Citations

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Healthy People 2020 Topics & Objectives: Nutrition and weight status. Available from: <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/nutrition-and-weight-status>.

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