

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

School Health and Wellness: Policy and Resource Review

Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Team

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Introduction

The Technical Assistance (TA) team at the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) conducted a brief, rapid review of school wellness policies that promote non-food celebrations in the classroom.

This report provides the following elements:

- brief background information;
- federal regulations for school wellness policies;
- sample wellness policies; and
- additional online resources, such as guides, reports, and toolkits.

Please note that this report provides a preliminary examination of research and policies. It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive review, nor are the resources provided endorsed by the Clearinghouse.

Background

Children spend a significant portion of their day at school. As such, a child's food choices and physical activity level during the school day may affect their overall health and wellbeing. Children obtain food during the school day via three avenues: school sponsored meal programs, competition foods (i.e., food sold through vending machines or other non-meal options), and informal settings (e.g., packed snacks, rewards, and classroom celebrations) (Murray et al., 2015).

School sponsored meal programs, such as the National School Lunch Program must meet Federal nutrition standards (United States Department of Agriculture, 2017). However, students may also access less nutritious foods (i.e., high-calorie and nutrient sparse foods) via informal settings or competition foods during the school day. These less nutritious foods may contribute to the childhood obesity problem in the United States (Murray et al., 2015). To combat childhood obesity, school nutrition and physical activity policies have undergone significant changes over the past 25 years to improve the accessibility of nutrient-dense foods as well as physical activity opportunities.

Local School Wellness Policies

A local school wellness policy guides a local education agency (LEA) or school district in creating a school environment that promotes student health and wellbeing. The wellness policy requirement was created by the Child Nutrition and Special Supplement Nutrition

Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 and further supported by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) (Local School Wellness Policy Implementation Under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, 2016; United States Department of Agriculture, 2016). Each LEA participating in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program must develop, implement, and evaluate a school wellness policy.

Local School Wellness Policy Implementation Under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

LEAs can customize the wellness policy to best meet the needs of their students. However, in school year 2016-2017, LEAs were required to revise the school wellness policy to include certain provisions (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016). Beginning in school year 2016–2017, LEAs were required to identify school personnel to oversee compliance with the policy, permit public involvement in the creation of the policy, and assess compliance every 3 years. Additionally, local school wellness policies are required to include the elements listed below (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016).

- Goals for nutrition and physical activity promotion and education.
- Standards and nutrition guidelines for food sold to students during the school day. Standards must be consistent with the school meal and Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards.
- Standards for all other food and beverages available during the school day. *This includes food provided at classroom parties and as incentives.*
- Only allow food and beverages that meet the Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards to be marketed in schools.
- Description of public involvement, updates, leadership, and evaluation plan.

To view the policy, please visit <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-07-29/pdf/2016-17230.pdf>.

Local School Wellness Policy Implementation Under Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Regulation 4200.1

In 2007, DoDEA Regulation 4200.1 was passed. This regulation required districts participating in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program to create a local wellness policy. To aid in policy development, districts were encouraged to create a wellness committee comprised of parents, students, and school personnel. Districts

must submit annual compliance reports to DoDEA Headquarters. Additionally, the wellness policy must include the following elements:

- Goals for nutrition and physical activity promotion and education.
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available during the school day.
- Guidelines for reimbursable school meals which cannot be less restrictive than those issued by the USDA.
- Plan for measuring the implementation of the local wellness policy, including designation of school personnel to ensure compliance.
- Involvement of parents, students, and other representatives to participate in the development of the policy.

To view the policy, please visit https://www.dodea.edu/wellness/upload/4200_1.pdf.

Model Wellness Policies

The TA team conducted a rapid review of publicly available online sources for model school wellness policies. Two model school wellness policies and six websites were identified. These policies and websites, along with a description and link to the source are listed below. Please note that these policies and websites have not been evaluated, nor are they endorsed, by the Clearinghouse.

Sample Wellness Policy and Guidance, DoDEA (2010)

This sample wellness policy and guidance was sent along with a memo to DoDEA Superintendents in 2010. The sample wellness policy covers a variety of different topics, including school celebrations involving food:

Schools should limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month. Each party should include no more than one food or beverage that does not meet nutrition standards for food and beverages sold individually . . . The district will disseminate a list of healthy party ideas to parents and teachers (p. 6).

To view the sample policy, please visit

https://www.dodea.edu/Offices/logistics/upload/2010_LWPolicy.pdf?cssearch=3517612.

Model Local School Wellness Policies on Physical Activity and Nutrition, National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (2005)

This sample wellness policy was developed in 2005 by a working group of more than 50 health and wellness professionals; the full list of organizations is included in the document link below. Much like the DoDEA sample policy, this model policy covers a variety of different topics, including school celebrations. According to the policy:

Schools should limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month. Each party should include no more than one food or beverage that does not meet nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually . . . The district will disseminate a list of healthy party ideas to parents and teachers. (p. 13)

To view the sample policy, please visit

<http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/resources/NANAWellnessPolicies.pdf>.

Wellness Policy Websites

- **Celebrations**, Alliance for a Healthier Generation
 - This website hosts a video with tips on how to celebrate in the classroom without food, as well as steps school personnel can take to update their wellness policy.
 - <https://www.healthiergeneration.org/take-action/schools/wellness-topics/smart-snacks/celebrations>
- **Local School Wellness Policy**, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - This website provides background information on school wellness policies, as well as links to tools and resources, a local wellness policy outreach toolkit, and a link to the federal registrar.
 - <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy>
- **Local School Wellness Policy**, Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC)
 - This website provides information on the requirements for a school wellness policy, links to policy briefs, and other resources.
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/wellness.htm>
- **Raise Your Hand: Supporting School Wellness**, American Heart Association and Voices for Healthy Kids
 - This website provides information on school wellness policies, how to advocate for and implement a school wellness policy in one's own community, how to build a campaign, resources, and success stories.
 - <https://schoolwellness.voicesforhealthykids.org/>

- **Refresh Your Policy**, Alliance for a Healthier Generation
 - This website includes a model wellness policy, link to the USDA’s Final Rule under the Healthy Hunger-free Kids Act 2010, and steps to updating a local wellness policy.
 - <https://www.healthiergeneration.org/take-action/schools/wellness-topics/policy-environment/local-school-wellness-policy/refresh-your>

- **State Policy Database**, National Association of State Boards of Education
 - This database houses state policies effective September 2017 or earlier across the 10 WSCC domains, including class parties. According to this database, there are no state policies that address nutrition standards for class parties.
 - <https://statepolicies.nasbe.org/health>.

Additional Online Resources

The TA team also identified additional resources through a rapid review of publicly available sources that promote school wellness policies and healthy celebrations. These resources, along with a description and link to the source are listed below.

Guides

- **Celebrations that Support Child Health**, Alliance for a Healthier Generation
 - This guide provides tips for implementing changes to a school wellness policy, as well as non-food and healthy food options for celebrations.
 - <https://www.healthiergeneration.org/sites/default/files/documents/20191021/56ad180a/Healthy%20Celebrations.pdf>

- **Guide to Healthy Rewards and Celebrations**, RiseVT
 - This guide provides elementary, middle, and high school teachers examples of how to reward and celebrate students without food.
 - https://fqi.risevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RiseVTHealthyRewards_V1.1.pdf

- **Healthy School Celebrations**, Center for Science in the Public Interest
 - This guide provides elementary school teachers tips and examples for non-food celebrations in the classroom, including birthdays and holidays.
 - https://cspinet.org/sites/default/files/attachment/healthy_school_celebrations.pdf

- ***Tips for Teachers: Promoting Healthy Eating & Physical Activity in the Classroom***, CDC
 - This guide provides teachers with tips and examples for healthy rewards, celebrations, and fundraising.
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/pdf/tips-for-teachers.pdf>

Reports and Toolkits

- ***Healthy Eating Toolkit***, Action for Healthy Kids
 - This interactive toolkit provides tips and resources on child nutrition and healthy eating.
 - <https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/nutrition-toolkit/>
- ***How Elementary Schools May Support 5210 Healthy Military Children***, Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
 - This toolkit provides tools and resources for elementary school teachers on healthy eating and physical activity, including healthy choices for snack time and celebrations, non-food rewards, and healthy fundraising.
 - https://5210.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/elementaryschooltoolkit_hmc_7-11-17.pdf
- ***Putting Local School Wellness Policies into Action: Stories from School Districts and Schools***, CDC
 - This report provides background information and success stories on how local school districts have implemented school wellness policies.
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/pdf/SchoolWellnessInAction.pdf>

Additional Assistance

The TA specialists at the Clearinghouse are happy to assist you. We provide support to professionals as they examine and make informed decisions about which programs fit specific situations and are worth the investment. Whether it is connecting you with the resources and tools to conduct a needs assessment in your community, suggesting the best evidence-based program or practice for your situation, or developing an evaluation plan, our team of experts is a call or email away.

Please visit our website at www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu or call 1-877-382-9185 to speak with a TA specialist.

References

- Local School Wellness Policy Implementation Under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, 7 C.R.F §§ 210 - 220 (2016). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-07-29/pdf/2016-17230.pdf>
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- United States Department of Agriculture. (2017). *The National School Lunch Program*. Retrieved from <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>