

Introduction to the Wellness Policy

Background

In the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, the U.S. Congress established a new requirement that all school districts with a federally-funded school meals program develop and implement wellness policies that address nutrition and physical activity by the start of the 2006-2007 school year. In response to requests for guidance on developing such policies, the Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Program (COPAN) School Site Task Force/Colorado Action For Health Kids (COAFHK) Steering Committee and the Colorado Department of Education, convened a work group of health, physical activity, nutrition, and education professionals from a variety of local and state organizations to develop guidelines for model policies for local school districts in Colorado.

The resource guide and sample policies on the CD meet the new federal requirement. This comprehensive set of model nutrition and physical activity policies is based on nutrition, public health research, and existing practices from national organizations, exemplary states and local school districts around the country. The COPAN/COAFHK priorities are to promote children's health and well-being as well as ease of policy development and implementation.

Using the Model Policies

School districts may choose to use the model policies on the CD as written or revise them as needed to meet local needs and reflect community priorities. When developing wellness policies, local school districts will need to consider their unique circumstances, challenges, and opportunities. Among the factors to take into account is the socioeconomic status of the student body; school size; rural, urban or suburban location; and presence of immigrant, dual-language, or limited-English students. Wellness policies that reflect the cultural and ethnic composition of the student body are endorsed.

A local school district may find it more practical to phase in the adoption of its wellness policies than to implement a comprehensive set of nutrition and physical activity policies all at once. Compromises from the ideal may be required as district decision makers consider challenges such as limited class time, curriculum requirements, and funding and space constraints. Many school districts have already implemented policies and practices regarding foods on campus, physical activities and other activities, school meals that can easily fit into this effort.

The CD contains a resource guide, sample policies, assessment tools, and a variety of resources to assist with the development, implementation, and monitoring/review of local wellness policies.

Adapted from the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity Model Local School Wellness Policies on Physical Activity and Nutrition, March 2005