



Integrating OST Guidelines with School Wellness Policies

Incorporating healthy food and physical activity into afterschool and out-of-school time (OST) programs is an integral component of a comprehensive strategy to prevent childhood obesity. This factsheet stresses the importance of involving OST program staff in planning, implementing, and evaluating local school district and individual school wellness policies, when possible, and provides links to practical resources. To learn more, please visit the Center's [*Minnesota Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Toolkit for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*](#).

Expanding the reach

Integrating OST program guidelines with school wellness policies, and involving OST staff in school wellness policy planning and implementation processes, will extend the reach of the wellness policies to a large proportion of the children and youth served by OST programs, especially given that many OST programs are run by school districts and located in school buildings. Over half of elementary schools report that they host a formal afterschool program of some sort.¹ Nationally, 90% of 21st Century Learning Programs (21st CCLC)

By integrating OST guidelines with school wellness policies, the reach of wellness policies can be expanded to a large proportion of the children served by OST programs.



are located in schools.² Students who participate in [Targeted Services](#), a state-funded, before school and afterschool academic and social skills support program serving students in grades 1-8, also stand to benefit.³

Federal and state requirements

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 required every public school district that offers federally funded school lunch and other meal and snack programs to develop and implement a local school wellness policy — a set of guidelines co-created by a committee of school staff, parents, students, school board members, and other community members. The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 enhanced and strengthened the wellness policy components by requiring each school district to periodically review and update its policy, allow physical education teachers and school health staff to join the wellness committee, and partner more effectively with parents, students, and community members in policy development, implementation and review. A comparison of the current and former guidelines, [Local School Wellness Policies \(LWP\): Comparison Chart of 2004 vs. 2010 Requirements](#) is maintained by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The 2010 provisions took effect in the 2011-2012 school year.⁴ The Food and Nutrition Service of the USDA is updating its local wellness policy guidelines and materials and will post these when they are ready at <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/healthy/wellnesspolicy.html>.

In 2010, Minnesota legislators enacted the Healthy Kids Bill to improve implementation of the federal local school wellness policy mandate, requiring school districts to post their wellness policies on district websites.⁵ In addition, the Minnesota Department of Education monitors school district compliance as part of its periodic administrative review of the implementation of the National School Lunch Program.

General resources

School wellness policy guidelines can be applied to physical activity and nutrition in OST programs, and the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy's [WellSAT](#) tool specifically includes OST guidelines in its assessment of school wellness policies.⁶ The [National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity](#) (NANA) and [Action for Healthy Kids](#) have also developed model school wellness policies that apply to OST programs.⁷ Study results suggest, though, that school districts may prefer to use or adapt model policies that have been developed or adopted by their state agencies or local organizations to ensure that the standards match state regulations.⁸

Minnesota guidance and activity

Many school wellness policies and standards in effect in Minnesota already include OST programming considerations. The Minneapolis Public School District's school wellness policy, for example, includes the following guidelines for before school and afterschool programming:

- Out of school hour childcare and programs will provide and encourage — verbally and through the provision of space, equipment, and activities — daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.
- Snacks served during the school day or in after school care or enrichment programs will make a positive contribution to children's diets and health. The district will work towards serving whole grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy as the primary snack items.
- Schools shall work with recreation agencies and other community organizations to coordinate and enhance opportunities available to students and staff for physical activity during their out-of-school time.

- The district will encourage community based organizations and other out of school time activity providers to provide healthy foods and physical activity as part of their programming.⁹

The Minneapolis policy stipulates that the district's superintendent must designate district- and site-level personnel to implement the policy. The policy also requires an annual progress report to the district's school board and a district-wide assessment of the policy's implementation every three years.¹⁰ All 47 of the district's schools have received training, technical assistance, assessment and resources through the State of Minnesota's Statewide Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) to help them implement the district's school wellness policy.¹¹

The school wellness policy for the St. Paul Public Schools also covers OST programs. The St. Paul policy requires that all foods and beverages sold on school premises must meet or exceed the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Snacks served to middle school and high school students in afterschool programs must meet the school district's wellness policy's standards. Schools are encouraged to participate in the School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program. In comparison to the Minneapolis school wellness policy language, though, the St. Paul policy language on monitoring and evaluation is less stringent. Unlike the Minneapolis policy, which requires assessments by the district every three years, the St. Paul policy does not schedule wellness policy assessments and states that annual reports will be provided upon request of the school board.^{12,13}

Opportunities and limitations

In practice, school wellness policies may be influenced by political realities within a school district. One study found that the strength of school wellness policies was dependent on the mix

of Republican and Democrat legislators within the school district.¹⁴ In addition, financially strapped schools may find it difficult to expand their scope of concerns to what happens after the last bell rings.

While addressing physical activity and nutrition components of OST programs in local school wellness policies can effectively reach many children, it is important to recognize that school wellness policies do not reach children in *all* OST settings. Many OST programs are held in community centers, libraries, houses of worship, or other non-school facilities. Although school districts can — and do — work with off-site OST programs to develop opportunities for nutritious food and active play, there are limits to how the policies in non-school settings can be implemented and assessed by school districts.

There can be significant advantages for OST programs that are not affiliated with public schools to align themselves with local school wellness policies. The [Afterschool Alliance](#) a national afterschool advocacy organization, has developed a step-by-step toolkit, [Afterschool & Health: Opportunities for Advocacy](#), to encourage afterschool programs to become involved in school wellness policy efforts to “advance a holistic approach to childhood obesity prevention” in their communities and become part of the “infrastructure of student health-promotion activities.”¹⁵ In sum, it bears noting that a sole focus on strengthening OST program links to school wellness policies could dilute other efforts that are designed to improve access to healthy foods and physical activity in OST programs for low-income children or children of color. Efforts to strengthen federally-funded snack and meal program guidelines are also very important and stand to reach a high proportion of disadvantaged children because the eligibility requirements for these programs are needs-based. As such, a holistic approach that incorporates multiple strategies may be most effective.

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Endnotes

- ¹ NAT'L CTR. FOR EDUC. STATISTICS, INST. OF EDUC. SCIS., *AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS* (2009), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009043.pdf>.
- ² AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE, *21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS FEDERAL AFTERSCHOOL INITIATIVE* (2012), available at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policy21stcclc.cfm>.
- ³ MINN. DEP'T OF EDUC., *STATE APPROVED ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS RESOURCE GUIDE* (Rev. 2013), at 30-36, available at https://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=051315&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary.
- ⁴ Numerous resources are available for developing school wellness policies. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Local School Wellness Policy Page includes a complete set of links and toolkits at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/npao/wellness.htm>.
- ⁵ S. 2908, 86th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Minn. 2010), MINN. STAT. § 124D.955 (2010), MINN. STAT. § 120B.021(2010).
- ⁶ YALE RUDD CTR. FOR FOOD POLICY, *WELLNESS SCHOOL ASSESSMENT TOOL (WELLSAT)*, <http://www.wellsat.org> (last visited Nov. 21, 2012).
- ⁷ Mary Story et al., *Schools and Obesity Prevention: Creating School Environments and Policies to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*, 87 *MILBANK Q.* 71 (2009), available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2879179>.
- ⁸ *Id.*
- ⁹ MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCH., *WELLNESS POLICY & GUIDELINES* (2006), available at http://sss.mpls.k12.mn.us/sites/6c9fd336-96c5-451c-a8a6-b6f00373668d/uploads/Wellness_Policy.pdf.
- ¹⁰ *Id.*
- ¹¹ MINNEAPOLIS HEALTH DEP'T, *PREVENTION & HEALTHY LIVING, PUBLIC SCHOOLS*, <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/health/living/schools> (last visited August 30, 2013). *See also* MINNEAPOLIS HEALTH DEP'T, *HEALTHY SCHOOLS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROJECT, WORKBOOK FOR DEVELOPING A LOCAL SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY* (undated), http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@health/documents/webcontent/convert_253931.pdf.
- ¹² SAINT PAUL PUBLIC SCH., *DRAFT — PROPOSED POLICY REVISION 533.00* (2013), available at http://boe.spps.org/uploads/policy_533_wellness_revision_draft_1-10-13.pdf.
- ¹³ *Id.*
- ¹⁴ Mary Story et al., *supra* note 7.
- ¹⁵ AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE, *AFTERSCHOOL & HEALTH, OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVOCACY* (date unknown), available at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyActiveHoursObesity.cfm>.