

Talking Points for Community Members Reaching Out to Media



- More than one in three children is at risk for developing diabetes, heart disease, and cancer later in life. Because children spend many of their waking hours and eat up to half of their daily calories at school, schools play a critical role in building lifelong healthy nutrition and physical activity habits. Additionally, healthy, active children experience fewer behavior problems and perform better academically.
- Most school districts already have a Local Wellness Policy (LWP), but many of these policies need updating:
 - 95% of school districts have existing LWPs (as of School Year 2013-14, most recent data available), but most policies remain fragmented, underdeveloped, and lack sufficient implementation plans, according to Bridging the Gap.
 - Schools are working hard to offer healthier meals and snacks with more whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and less salt and sugar, and no trans-fats. However, when it comes to LWPs, many schools still have work to do:
 - According to Bridging the Gap, less than 50% of LWPs (as of School Year 2013-14) included language for all required LWP components (e.g., nutrition education, physical activity, physical education, school meals, school snacks and beverages, and implementation and evaluation plans).
 - LWPs should address a variety of important issues: alignment with the updated nutrition standards for school meals and snacks; classroom celebrations and rewards; nutrition education; marketing of unhealthy food and beverages; physical activity; and physical education.
- LWPs work best when parents, teachers, and community members come together to provide input on the school policy, coupled with school officials ensuring the LWP is readily available and transparent to parents, and schools are accountable for implementing the policies.
- **What's new?**
 - **School districts will need to address marketing of unhealthy food and beverages in the school space.** The majority of public school students are exposed to food and beverage marketing at school; 70% of elementary and middle school students and 90% of high school students attended schools with food and beverage marketing (2012 study in *JAMA Pediatrics*, most recent data available). The most heavily marketed food and beverages in schools are unhealthy, including for candy, snack food, beverages, and fast food.



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- According to Bridging the Gap, only 14% of LWPs had strong policies restricting the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages in school (as of School Year 2013-14).
- While USDA's final rule requires schools to address unhealthy food and beverage marketing, school districts can specify which forms of marketing to address such as signs, scoreboards, posters, vending machine fronts, and corporate sponsorships.
- **School districts must regularly share with the public their progress on improving children's nutrition, physical activity, and overall wellbeing.** School districts will notify parents and the public about their LWP annually. A more in-depth assessment is required every three years to track each school's progress towards full LWP implementation.
 - According to Bridging the Gap, nearly one-quarter of LWPs required a report to the public on wellness policy implementation and over one-half required a report on wellness policy compliance (as of School Year 2013-14).
- LWPs can also address other ways to improve nutrition and physical activity for students, such as:
 - Shifting unhealthy school fundraisers to profitable healthy food or non-food fundraisers, such as bottled water sales, healthy snack sales (i.e., granola bars or fruit), books, plants, flowers, auctions, walk-a-thons, and "fun runs";
 - Ensuring school celebrations support healthy eating and physical activity, and using non-food rewards;



- Improving access to clean, drinking water for students throughout the school day;
- Giving kids enough time to eat to support healthy eating;
- Discouraging withholding physical activity as a tool for school discipline;
- Promoting physical activity and healthier eating by allowing and encouraging shared use of school facilities;
- Providing safe, reliable, and active transportation options to and from school; and
- Providing ample opportunities for physical activity, providing quality physical education, and recess.