

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Management
September 23, 2005

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Wellness Policy Development

TO: Residential Child Care Institutions

FROM: Vonda Fekete, M.S., R.D., L.D.N.
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Division of Food and Nutrition
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After the June training sessions, we received questions from Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCI's) concerning the development of the Local Wellness Policy. Since RCCI's do not fit the template of a school district, we are providing additional information to assist in developing a policy.

Since you participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), you are required to meet all of the components of the Local Wellness Policy established by Section 204 of Public Law 108-265, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. The law requires that each local education agency (LEA) participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program develop a local wellness policy that promotes the health of students and addresses the growing problem of childhood obesity. A school wellness policy must include measurable goals for nutrition education, physical activity, food provided on school campus, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness. The goals set forth in the policy will establish regulations for a la carte foods, fundraisers, vending machines, classroom parties, and food used as rewards. However, you must develop a wellness policy in the context of what is appropriate for your environment.

The law requires parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public to be involved in the process. Although it may be difficult to find representation for the groups identified in the federal law, you may be able to identify groups that are not in the law but are more appropriate for your situation. Simply indicate/document the person chosen and the rationale. If your institution is already working on student wellness issues and has an existing infrastructure, such as a health council or a wellness committee, these people may be well-positioned to assist in the development of the policy. Frequently, members of *effective* policy teams offer a combination of qualities. Often they:

- Demonstrate interest in improving school nutrition and physical activity in schools;
- Are effective communicators and team players;

- Possess some understanding of the procedural requirements for policy, and
- Have policy-related experience in your setting.

Before making plans to develop policies, you should assess existing policies, the current environment, and the nutrition and physical activity needs of your students. For example, if students are only offered foods through the reimbursable meal (no vending machines, school stores, a la carte), but they are rewarded with candy, soda, etc. in the classroom, then a policy could state that providing food as a reward is prohibited. In a situation where there are adults in the center, although they may not be included in the NSLP, the policy will impact them if they are on the same "school grounds". In addition, it is important for children to see that the policies don't just apply to them, but apply to everyone because it is a matter of making healthy lifestyle choices. Likewise, the same applies for faculty lounges in public schools.

An example of a physical activity goal is that students/residents will be provided an opportunity to be physically active "x" minutes everyday. Another example is that students/residents will not be permitted to exceed "x" amount of media time (computers, computer games, television, videos, etc) in a day. If similar policies already exist, they can be incorporated into the Local Wellness Policy, as long as they meet the requirements. Since RCCI's operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the non-structured school day can be used to incorporate nutrition education and physical activity.

The policy making process is individualized for each RCCI. It is important that you become familiar with it's policy making process and timeline. In many cases, there is a CEO, Director, or Board of Directors who will "sign off" on policies.

For additional information and resources on Local Wellness Policies visit:

- USDA web site

http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy_examples.html

- Project PA web site

http://nutrition.psu.edu/projectpa/CCNPLR/html/CCNPLR_Materials.html

If you have additional questions concerning the Local Wellness Policy and what is appropriate for your environment, please contact myself at 1-800-331-0129, Ext. 33538 or Cheryl Oberholser at Ext. 62374657.