

Policy Component: Measurement and Evaluation

Goal

School districts will develop a plan for measuring implementation of the local district nutrition and physical activity policies, including designation of one or more persons with operational responsibility for ensuring that schools are addressing the policy.

Rationale

In order for policies to be successful, school districts must establish a plan for measuring implementation and sustaining local efforts, including evaluation, feedback and documentation based on sound evidence.

Policy Recommendations

Policies for Measurement and Evaluation will address the following areas:

- Monitoring
- Policy Review

Specific guidance regarding the implementation of each policy recommendation for Measurement and Evaluation follows under *Implementation Guidance*, after this section. Resources to assist with the implementation of each policy recommendation are found in *Resources* at the end of this section.

This section provides recommendations (not requirements) for policy language for Measurement and Evaluation. This language represents recommended best practice for developing school nutrition and physical activity policies. School districts may choose to use the policy recommendations as written or revise them as needed to meet local needs and reflect community priorities. When developing nutrition and physical activity policies, districts will need to take into account their unique circumstances, challenges, opportunities and available resources. Policies should meet local needs and be adapted to the health concerns, food preferences and dietary practices of different ethnic groups.

Policy Recommendations

Monitoring

The superintendent or designee shall ensure compliance with established districtwide nutrition and physical activity policies. In each school, the principal or designee shall ensure compliance with those policies in his or her school and shall report on the school's compliance to the school district superintendent or designee. School food service staff members, at the school or district level, shall ensure compliance with nutrition policies within school food service areas and shall report on this matter to the superintendent (or if done at the school level, to the school principal).

Policy Review

Districts shall identify a strategy and schedule to help review policy compliance, assess progress and determine areas in need of improvement. As part of that process, the school district shall review nutrition and physical activity policies; new research and evidence on health trends and effective programs; provision of an environment that supports healthy eating and physical activity; and nutrition and physical education policies and program elements. The district and individual schools within the district shall, as necessary, revise the nutrition and physical activity policies and develop work plans to facilitate their implementation.



Implementation Guidance

Monitoring and Policy Review

Evaluation is critically important to education decision makers in a number of ways. It helps them to:

- develop well-designed policies and programs;
- ensure accountability to funding agencies;
- weigh and compare various solutions to identified problems;
- determine whether to support or oppose particular programs or policies;
- justify decisions to the general public, the legislature and the news media;
- build consensus among people with different political views; and
- make incremental improvements in policies and programs on a continuous basis.

USDA School Wellness Policy regulations require that districts establish a plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy, including the designation of one or more persons within the local education agency or at each school, as appropriate, charged with ensuring that the school meets the local wellness policy.

A good evaluation plan does not need to be intimidating, extensive and resource intensive or put undue burdens on school district staff members. Its critical function is to answer some basic questions that are very important to policymakers, school administrators, families and the general public, including:

- What changes in nutrition education, physical activity, the nutritional quality of foods available to students, and other aspects covered by the policy occurred in each school as a result of the district policy? For example:
 - ♦ Did the number of students participating in nutrition education change?
 - ♦ Did the students have a different number of minutes of physical activity?
 - ♦ Did any schools change available food options?
 - ♦ Did participation in the School Breakfast Program or National School Lunch Program change?
- Did the policy and implementation address the issues identified in the needs assessment? For example:
 - ♦ Is it making a difference? If so, how?
 - ♦ What's working?
 - ♦ What's not working?
- How can the impact of the policy be increased to enhance its effect on student health and academic learning?

The types of evaluation methods used will be locally determined by school districts based on the components of their local nutrition and physical activity policies. Evaluation can include descriptions of any relevant changes in nutrition and physical activity in the district using a variety of methods, such as student, staff and parent surveys and collection of quantitative data regarding school nutrition and physical activity programs and practices. Policy evaluation can include assessment of the level of satisfaction with policy implementation, qualitative and quantitative analysis of any

Implementation Guidance

changes produced, and assessment of the consequences and impact. Additional information on specific evaluation strategies used by Connecticut's 10 pilot districts is found in *Section 9 – School Nutrition Policies Pilots*.

Several types of evaluation are relevant to school nutrition and physical activity, including process evaluation and outcome-based evaluation.

- **Process evaluation** assesses whether a *program* was implemented and operated as intended. It also addresses the questions of “why” and “why not.” Process evaluation indicators include contrasting actual and planned performance. Student and family satisfaction surveys are examples of process evaluation. School districts can use process evaluation to identify whether their nutrition and physical activity policies are being implemented as planned.
- **Outcome-based evaluation** assesses the *results* or *impact* of a program on the participants, e.g., students' health status, absenteeism and dropout rates. Outcome evaluations depend on the stage of development of the program, and can be short-term, intermediate and long-term. Outcome evaluations represent a change that occurs as a result of the program and may include changes in the following outcomes:
 - ♦ knowledge
 - ♦ attitudes and beliefs
 - ♦ behavior
 - ♦ skills
 - ♦ risk or protective behaviors
 - ♦ life condition
 - ♦ environment (including public and private policies, formal and informal enforcement of regulations, and influence of social norms and other societal forces)

Outcome-based evaluation is a systematic way to determine if a project has achieved its goals. This approach helps organizations establish clear program benefits (outcomes), identify ways to measure the program benefits (indicators), and clarify the intended beneficiaries of the program.

Indicators

Evaluation requires the gathering of evidence or *indicators*. Indicators are specific, observable and measurable characteristics or conditions that indicate that a specific change has taken place. Indicators can be developed for activities (process indicators) and/or for outcomes (outcome indicators). Districts should choose indicators that relate to the local policy statements. Some examples of indicators are found in the chart on the next page.

School districts are encouraged to use outcome-based evaluation procedures to justify changes based on documented outcomes. Outcome-based evaluation helps school district staff members be better positioned to request and receive funding because the benefits and impact of the program can be described in very specific terms by identifying what the program will do for participants. It also helps school district staff members better communicate the benefits they intend to deliver to program participants.

Evaluation Indicators

Process Evaluation

- Number of students reached/impacted
- Number of teachers and other school staff members reached/impacted
- Economic status and racial/ethnic background of students reached/impacted
- Quality of services
- Cost of implementation
- Revenues generated from healthy foods sold at school
- Changes in health and physical education curriculums
- Changes in amount of time spent on physical education and recess
- Changes in before- and after-school physical activity opportunities
- Staffing for services or programs
- Meal participation rates for school breakfast and lunch
- Number/percent of foods that meet nutrition standards
- Number of people reached through education efforts
- Number of activities/meetings/events
- Number of classes/training sessions/workshops conducted

Outcome-Based Evaluation

- Student fitness tests (e.g., percent of students passing all four Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessments, percent of students passing the national Physical Best Challenge)
- Student Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Changes in student food choices (e.g., increased consumption of fruits and vegetables)
- Children's nutrition status (e.g., prevalence of health conditions such as obesity, tooth decay, iron-deficiency anemia, diabetes)

Adapted with permission from *Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn*, National Association of State Boards of Education, 2000, and *Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005. <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/evalguide.pdf>

Evaluation Partnerships

Districts may consider partnering with local hospitals, universities, health departments and other institutions for help with the evaluation process. Evaluations with outside providers must be conducted in a way that is in compliance with state and federal confidentiality laws, such as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other state statutes.

References

- Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265)*:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/PL_108-265.pdf
- Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide. Part I: Physical Activity, Healthy Eating and Tobacco-Use Prevention*, National Association of State Boards of Education, March 2000:
<http://www.nasbe.org/healthyschools/fithealthy.html>
- Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMWR 1999; 48(No. RR-11): <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework.htm>
- Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005: <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/evalguide.pdf>
- The Local Process: How to Create and Implement a Local Wellness Policy*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Team Nutrition Website: http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy_steps.html

Resources

Resources are listed by main category. Many resources contain information on multiple content areas. For additional resources, consult each policy component section of the *Action Guide*.

Evaluation

- CDC Evaluation Working Group Resources*. Provides basic background information on program evaluation and links to hundreds of manuals, tools and resources from other organizations.
<http://www.cdc.gov/eval/resources.htm>
- Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2000. A tool kit to help schools take action to improve students' eating and physical activity practices.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthy/changing.html>
- Criteria for Evaluating School Based Approaches to Increasing Good Nutrition and Physical Activity*, Action for Healthy Kids, 2004: http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/special_exclusive.php
- Evaluating Community Programs and Initiatives Community Toolbox*, University of Kansas:
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/tools_toc.htm
- Evaluation Primer: An Overview of Education Evaluation*. From *Understanding Evaluation: The Way to Better Prevention Programs*, Westat, Inc., 1993: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/primer1.html>
- Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMWR 1999; 48(No. RR-11): <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework.htm>
- Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005: <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/evalguide.pdf>
- Logic Model Development Guide*, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001. Developed to provide practical assistance in completing outcome-oriented evaluation of projects. Provides orientation in using the underlying principles of "logic modeling" to enhance program planning, implementation and dissemination activities.
<http://www.wkcf.org/Programming/ResourceOverview.aspx?CID=281&ID=3669> or <http://www.wkcf.org> (Search for "Logic Model Development Guide.")
- Nutrition Education: Principles of Sound Impact Evaluation*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2005:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/NutritionEducation/Files/EvaluationPrinciples.pdf>
- Opportunity to Learn Standards for Elementary Physical Education*, Council on Physical Education for Children, 2000. Addresses program elements essential for providing a full opportunity for students to learn physical education in elementary school. Includes a self-evaluation checklist that can be used in planning, evaluation, program development and advocacy efforts by anyone interested in the availability of quality physical education at the elementary level.
<http://member.aahperd.org/template.cfm?template=Productdisplay.cfm&productID=368§ion=5>

- Opportunity to Learn Standards for Middle School Physical Education*, Council on Physical Education for Children, 2000. Describes the elements that a quality middle school physical education program needs in order for all students to have full opportunity to meet content and performance standards.
<http://member.aahperd.org/Template.cfm?template=ProductDisplay.cfm&Productid=726§ion=5>
- Opportunity to Learn Standards for High School Physical Education*, Council on Physical Education for Children, 2000. Describes the elements that a quality high school physical education program needs in order for all students to have full opportunity to meet content and performance standards.
<http://member.aahperd.org/Template.cfm?template=ProductDisplay.cfm&Productid=727§ion=5>
- Physical Activity Evaluation Handbook*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/handbook/pdf/handbook.pdf>
- Program Development and Evaluation*, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension:
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/index.html>
- Program Evaluation Resources*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/evaluation/resources.htm>
- School Health Index for Physical Activity and Healthy Eating – A Self Assessment and Planning Guide*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005:
<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/>
- Survey Procedures Quick Tips*, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension:
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/resources/pdf/Tipsheet7.pdf>
- Surveys for Child Nutrition Programs*, National Food Service Management Institute. Several surveys to assess student, parent and school staff satisfaction with school food-service programs.
<http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/2005resourcecatalog.htm#SURVEYS>
- The Evaluation Exchange*, Harvard Family Research Project. Addresses current issues facing program evaluators of all levels and highlights innovative methods and approaches to evaluation, emerging trends in evaluation practice, and practical applications of evaluation theory.
<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval.html>
- The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Program Evaluation*, National Science Foundation, 2002. Includes general evaluation information as well as strategies that address culturally sensitive evaluation.
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/start.htm>
- Understanding Evaluation: The Way to Better Prevention Programs*, Westat, Inc., 1993:
<http://www.ed.gov/PDFDocs/handbook.pdf>

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Additional resources can be found in the *Healthy School Nutrition Environment Resource List* available at <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/Student/NutritionEd/index.htm>. This list is updated regularly.