

Maintain, Measure and Evaluate the School Wellness Policy

In order to ensure success, establish a plan for measuring implementation and impact of the school wellness policy. A good evaluation plan doesn't need to be extensive, formal or put undue burdens on staff. It just needs to assess some fundamental aspects of your policy to ensure that they are in place and functioning as intended. The following seven points will guide you in setting up an effective evaluation of your school wellness policy:

1. Designate one or more person(s) within the district or within each school with operational responsibility for ensuring the district/school is carrying out the policy.
2. Maintain a district "School Wellness Committee" that meets at least bi-annually or quarterly to monitor implementation. Such committees may be beneficial also to successful implementation in that they can serve in an advisory capacity.
3. Obtain feedback from students, parents, administration, school staff and the community concerning the policy. Brief surveys are an excellent way to gather this input.
4. Document any educational or financial impacts to the students, food service program, student store or vending programs. Keep in mind, baseline data is important here in order to measure any change.
5. Document what changes to nutrition education, physical activity or the nutritional quality of foods available to students were made as a result of the policy. Once again, having good baseline data is essential.
6. Document any changes that are made to the school environment to better promote academic learning and development of healthy habits. Such things as additional water stations, removal of unhealthy vending items, and more hours of physical education are all examples of environmental changes to be recorded here.
7. Determine how well aligned your documented changes are with your original needs assessment. Be sure all issues identified as "needs" early on are being addressed through your policy practices.
8. Determine what is working and what isn't and update or amend the policy as the process moves on. Your policy is a work in progress and should be updated as your district needs change and as you determine your successes and barriers to student wellness in your school environment.

For more information on School Wellness Policy implementation/evaluation, go to: www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy_steps.html