

WCS Wellness Policy

FAQ

Q. What is the big deal? Why is a wellness policy needed?

- Obesity is increasing rapidly in the United States, affecting adults and children and people of all races, ethnicities, and income levels.
- Since 1980, the percentage of overweight children ages 6 to 11 has doubled, and the percentage of overweight adolescents ages 12 to 19 has tripled. Childhood obesity has both immediate and long-term serious health impacts.
- In some communities almost half of pediatric diabetes cases are type 2 diabetes, which was once believed to affect only adults.
- In one large study, 61% of overweight 5-to 10-year-olds already had risk factors for heart disease, and 26% had two or more risk factors for the disease.
- Overweight children have a greater risk of social and psychological problems such as discrimination and poor self-esteem.
- Overweight children have a 70% chance of being overweight as adults – facing higher risks for many diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and several types of cancers.
- The costs of treating obesity-related diseases are staggering and rising rapidly. Direct health costs rose from \$52 billion in 1995 to \$75 billion in 2003.
- Good eating habits and regular physical activity are critical for maintaining a healthy weight. Unfortunately, less than 25% of adolescents eat enough fruits and vegetables each day. More than a third of students in grades 9–12 do not regularly engage in vigorous physical activity.

Q. But why public schools, we didn't create the problem?

- Reversing the obesity epidemic requires a long-term, well-coordinated approach to reach young people where they live, learn, and play. Schools have a big part to play. Working with other public, voluntary, and private sector organizations, schools can play a critical role in reshaping social and physical environments and providing information, tools, and practical strategies to help students adopt healthy lifestyles.
- More than 95% of young people are enrolled in schools.
- Students have the opportunity to eat a large portion of their daily food intake and to be physically active at school.
- Schools are an ideal setting for teaching young people how to adopt and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle.
- Research has shown that well-designed, well-implemented school programs can effectively promote physical activity and healthy eating.
- Emerging research documents the connections between physical activity, good nutrition, physical education and nutrition programs, and academic performance.

Q. Is the wellness policy mandatory? Who says?

- The Federal School Nutritional Reauthorization Act of 2005 mandated that all school systems have a wellness policy in place by July 2006. The State of Tennessee took it further by passing a comprehensive Nutrition Bill TCA 49-6-2307 changing the nutritional standards for all schools (WCS made the changes in 2005) and by passing a Physical Activity Bill which requires all public school system students to have 30 minutes of physical activity a week. (This is way below national recommendations and was mandated without funding, but the intent is good and moves everyone in the right direction).

Q. What if we choose not to participate?

- Our district would be eliminated from the receiving reimbursement funds from the USDA...federal funding would be reduced.

Q. How are our cafeteria products affected?

- Drink sizes, no whole milk, sugar content, sodium content, fat content of all foods, menu items as well as ala carte restrictions.

Q. What about foods brought in to the schools?

- It is agreed by the wellness committee and Director of Schools, individual principals can either stop or limit items brought in. It is suggested that healthy items be used. The cafeteria can provide foods that meet all nutrition requirements such as 1 oz. cookies, low sodium pizza for pizza parties and etc.

Q. What about fund raisers?

- It is suggested fund raiser ideas be something other than foods. Your school nutrition department has a list of fund raiser ideas.

Q. Will schools get support from the district office on this initiative?

- The district office will be available to assist you with the SHI and the recording/tracking of data. The availability of extra funding to help with this initiative is not foreseen.