

Office of Catholic Schools Wellness Policy



DI O C E S E O F A R L I N G T O N

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A Vision for School Health and Wellness

Health and success in school are interrelated. Schools have a duty to provide a safe and healthy environment, conducive to preventing injury, disease and conditions that may lead to illness, disability or even death. Schools cannot achieve their mission of education and faith formation unless students and staff are encouraged to be healthy and fit. Evidence based research strongly supports positive student academic outcomes when health and wellness strategies are utilized in the school setting.

In passing the Child Nutrition and WIC (Women, Infants and Children program) Reauthorization Act of 2004, Congress mandated that all school districts participating in federal school meal programs create and implement school wellness policies by July 2006. In 2010, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act strengthened local wellness policy requirements and added requirements for public participation, transparency and implementation. These policies must address nutrition education, nutrition standards for foods sold, and physical activity, and must include measures for evaluating the policy's effectiveness.

On February 26, 2014, the proposed rule for wellness policies was published in the Federal Register. The public comment period closed on April 28, 2014. FNS appreciates the valuable comments provided by stakeholders and the public. FNS received 57,838 public comments that included 546 distinct submissions and 57,285 form letters that were submitted through four large letter campaigns and four small letter campaigns. FNS considered all comments in the development of this final rule.

On July 21, 2016, the final rule was published in the Federal Register. The final rule strengthens the requirements on public involvement, transparency, implementation, and evaluation among other topics.

The Diocese of Arlington Office of Catholic Schools, hereafter referred to as district, Wellness Policy, has been developed using best practice resources to meet the minimum requirements of the legislation. Each diocesan school will adopt and implement this district policy. Affiliated schools may choose to adopt the district policy or may choose to formulate their own policy following federal guidelines. Schools will evaluate their individual fulfillment of the policy, and any added enhancements to the policy based on that individual school health team's assessment of needs.

The Office of Catholic Schools endeavor to provide a coordinated school health program consistent with the Centers for Disease Control's Coordinated School Health Model and practices outlined in the *Virginia School Health Guidelines*. The eight components of this framework are; a safe, health enhancing school environment, sequential health education curriculum, sequential physical education curriculum, a nutrition services program, a school health services program, a counseling/psychosocial services program, integrated family and community involvement, and a staff health promotion program. The Office of Catholic Schools wellness policy is to be implemented within this framework.

Office of Catholic Schools Wellness Policy

This policy promotes student health and fitness by creating a school environment conducive to healthy activity, lifestyle, and nutrition choices.

The Diocesan School Health Task Force, in consultation with school administrators, educators, staff, food service team, parents, community members and students, developed this policy to provide strategies to help students eat healthier, be more physically active and to help curb the epidemic of childhood obesity.

This policy meets minimum requirements, and establishes the following for diocesan schools:

- **Goals for physical education and activity;**
- **Goals for other school-based activities which promote wellness;**
- **Goals for nutrition education;**
- **Nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages available on school campuses during the school day;**
- **Strategies for implementation;**
- **Plan to measure outcomes from policy implementation of policies;**
- **Designation by the principal of a school health team and the coordinator at the school level, who has operational responsibility for ensuring the school health team, meets the policy requirements.**

I. Physical Education and Activity

Physical Education Curriculum

To learn skills and knowledge needed to establish and sustain an active lifestyle, every diocesan student from kindergarten through grade 10 will have the opportunity to participate in quality comprehensive physical education and physical activity.

Physical education shall be taught by well-prepared specialists. All PE teachers shall regularly participate in professional development activities to effectively deliver the PE program. A quality physical education program must provide learning opportunities, appropriate instruction, meaningful and challenging content for all children recognizing their development and movement abilities. Physical education should not be compared to, or confused with, other physical activity experiences such as recess, intramurals, or recreational endeavors.

The Office of Catholic Schools physical education, health and nutrition curricula will be reviewed and revised regularly to assure a vision for healthy and balanced living. Concepts and skills in health and physical education (PE) will be integrated in a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based fashion that is developmentally appropriate. The physical education program helps students develop the knowledge, motor skills, self-management skills, attitudes and confidence to maintain physical activity throughout their lives. Classroom based health education will complement PE by reinforcing these skills, and reduce time spent on sedentary activities.

Health related fitness testing, such as the Presidential Fitness Challenge will be integrated into the curriculum as an instructional tool. Staff will maintain the confidentiality of these results, which will be available only to the students and their parents or guardians.

Diocesan schools will strive to increase the activity portion of PE instruction to periods totaling between 100 to 150 minutes per week (elementary and middle school) and 225 minutes per week (secondary school) during the school day, for the entire school year. Students should spend 50% of PE class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity. High schools should encourage students to participate by expanding elective health and physical education course options for juniors and seniors.

Physical Activity Recommendations for Children

The district supports the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendation that children and adolescents engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.

When activities, or events, make it necessary for students to remain indoors for long periods of time, schools should give students periodic breaks during which they are encouraged to stand and be moderately active.

Daily Recess

Quality physical education and daily recess are components of the curriculum that enable students to develop physical competence, health-related fitness, self-responsibility, and enjoyment of physical activity so that they can be physically active for a lifetime. The Office of Catholic Schools supports the National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE) recommendations for recess. Recess should not replace physical education. A minimum 20-minute daily recess is to be scheduled for students who attend preschool or elementary school. Exceptions can be made to this policy on early release days where recess is at the discretion of the individual school.

Scheduling recess before lunch is recommended as an effective strategy to increase meal consumption and promote better behavior.

Other School Based Activities Involving Physical Activity

Extracurricular Physical Activity Programs Before and After School

The Office of Catholic Schools encourages opportunities for youth in regular physical activity (e., g., CYO intramural sports, walking/running clubs) beyond the school day. These opportunities can assist students with meeting daily physical activity recommendations.

Diocesan schools are in a position to support many safe opportunities, as well as provide the physical facilities, for students to participate in quality intramural and interscholastic athletic programs. Schools will continue to support structured activities like organized individual and team sports and instructional programs. Other programs can be accessed through local community and parish youth sports programs.

Physical Activity and Punishment

Physical activity provides students with positive experiences that will motivate them to pursue and develop active lifestyles. The Office of Catholic Schools prohibits withholding PE class as a consequence for negative student behavior or incomplete course work. Withholding recess should be a last resort measure as physical activity promotes release of negative energy.

Safety

Current school safety policies aim to minimize injury and illness related to physical activity. The PE instructor will regularly inspect, for health and safety hazard, all spaces, facilities, school grounds and equipment used by students for PE and recess. PE equipment hazards will be removed from use until the school corrects the safety deficiency.

When appropriate, schools can work with community partners to make it safer and easier for students to walk and bike to school.

Incorporating Physical Activity into the Classroom

The Office of Catholic Schools supports learning using a variety of techniques and modalities. Periodic physical activity should be incorporated into the classroom as part of the learning process of used as an energizing break.

II. School Nutrition

Nutrition Education

Schools will provide classroom based nutrition education to grades K through 10, as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based program. Nutrition instruction will be integrated within the comprehensive school health education curriculum, with the goal to influence students' actual eating behaviors. Curriculum will be taught by educators, following diocesan health curriculum guidelines.

Health enhancing nutrition practices such as; food intake versus energy expenditure, eating more fruits and vegetables, and healthy food preparations, should be included in the curriculum. A comprehensive program will incorporate the food service program, and other academic areas such as language arts, science, and math. Instruction practices should be enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and include participatory activities for students.

School Meal Program Guidelines

All student meals will provide varied and nutritious food choices that are consistent with USDA nutrition standards and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Diocesan schools with full service cafeteria facilities are encouraged to offer the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

School meals will:

- **Meet minimum nutrition requirements established by local, state and federal statutes and regulations;**
- **Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables;**
- **Serve only low-fat (1%) fat-free milk and nutritionally equivalent flavored or nondairy alternatives as defined by USDA;**
- **Ensure that half of the grains served are whole grain;**
- **Share information about the nutritional content with students, families and school staff members;**
- **Be appealing and attractive to children.**

Schools with less than full service cafeteria facilities will strive to meet these guidelines to the best of their ability, given their existing resources.

Menu Planning

National School Lunch menus shall be planned with input from students, parents and other school personnel, taking into account students' cultural norms and preferences.

Breakfasts

Diocesan schools with full service cafeterias are encouraged to offer breakfast at school per USDA guidelines, in order to meet student nutritional needs and enhance the student's ability to learn.

Special Dietary Needs

With appropriate medical documentation, reasonable efforts will be made to modify meals for students with food allergies or other special dietary needs. Parents will incur the additional costs which may result from such dietary requests.

Foods and Beverages Outside of School Meal Program

Food or Beverage Contracts

Agreements with food or vending companies to sell foods or beverages in schools should ensure that contractors follow the district's nutrition standards.

Cafeteria A La Carte Sales, Vending and School Stores

A variety of healthy foods and beverages will be sold at school in the cafeteria, vending machines and school stores. These foods and beverages must be consistent with the USDA and Dietary Guidelines for Americans and in keeping with the State of Virginia Action for Healthy Kids Food Health Guidelines.

During meal periods, the sale of food with minimal nutritional value is prohibited by federal regulations in areas of the schools where USDA school meals are sold or eaten. All snacks, sweets, or side dishes sold or served on school sites outside of the federal school meal programs will strive to meet all of the following guidelines:

- **Have 30% or less of its total calories from fat;**
- **Have 10% or less of its total calories from saturated plus trans fat;**
- **Have 35% or less of its weight from sugars, excluding naturally occurring sugars in fruits, vegetables and dairy ingredients;**
- **Have 200 calories or fewer;**
- **Be limited in portion size based on national competitive food standards.**

Energy Products

Energy products are beverages sold as performance-enhancing aids (containing ephedra, creatine and excessive caffeine), which impact cardiac output. There are significant health risks associated with the use of these products, including heart rhythm irregularities, nervous system disturbances, gastrointestinal problems and stroke. It is prohibited to possess and/or consume these products during school hours and school activities at both the elementary and secondary level. Product name examples may include; Red Bull, Kronik, Go Fast and others.

Closed Campus

Students are not routinely permitted to leave school grounds during the school day to purchase food or beverages. Special considerations will be given to those in 12th grade programs, where prior parental and school permission has been granted for the student to leave the campus.

School-Sponsored Events

A variety of healthy foods and beverages will be offered or sold at school-sponsored events. School-sponsored events include, but are not limited to, athletic events, dances, and performances.

Fundraising

School fundraising activities should be diverse in nature. Sales that may involve food or beverages should promote healthy product choices that meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards.

Schools should consider the use of non-food fundraisers, and encourage those promoting physical activity (such as walk-a-thons, Jump Rope for Heart, fun runs, etc.)

Lists of healthy fundraising ideas to consider are available from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and the USDA.

Classroom Snacks

Snacks provided in extended day or enrichment programs will feature healthy choices that meet the USDA and Dietary Guidelines for Americans nutrition standards. School personnel will not withhold student access to snacks as punishment.

Schools that participate in the After-School Snack Program must provide snacks that meet USDA requirements.

Food Brought Into School

Schools will encourage families to pack healthy lunches and snacks and to refrain from including beverages and foods that do not meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Parents are discouraged from providing students fast food meals at school.

It is recommended that all food to be shared with other students should be commercially prepared, prepackaged, unopened and, when possible, individually wrapped.

Celebrations

All foods offered on the school campus should meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School Nutrition standards.

Schools are encouraged to provide non-food celebrations and rewards. Healthy party ideas are available from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and from the USDA.

Classroom snacks brought by parents should meet or exceed Smart Snacks nutrition standards.

Water

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to students throughout the school day. Water should be available where school meals are served during mealtimes.

Water cups/jugs will be available in the cafeteria if a drinking fountain is not present.

All water sources and containers should be maintained on a regular basis to ensure good hygiene and health safety standards. Such sources and containers may include drinking fountains, water jugs, hydration stations, water jets and other methods for the delivery of drinking water.

It is a decision on a local level to determine if students be allowed to bring and carry (approved) water bottles filled with only water with them throughout the day.

Specific Dietary Guidelines for School Meals

District schools must ensure that reimbursable USDA school meals meet the USDA School Wellness standards for nutrition, as specified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's policy regulations for school meals, as well as all state and local requirements.

USDA reimbursable menus will support and reinforce the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These guidelines encourage increased consumption of nutrient-dense foods and beverages, such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits and low fat dairy products, while limiting levels of cholesterol, fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and added sugars.

All non-USDA reimbursable meals served in Diocesan schools will strive to meet USDA nutrient standards, as specified in the federal regulations.

- To the extent possible, schools should offer at least two different non-fried vegetables and two different fruit options each day.
- To the extent possible, schools should offer whole-grain foods. At least half of the recommended daily servings of grains should be whole grains.
- Low-fat and non-fat dairy products, including yogurt, milk and cheese, will be offered.

Schools will make the nutritional content of meals and other foods and beverages sold available to students, families and school staff members. Nutrition information will be displayed at point of purchase in the cafeteria line.

Other School Based Activities Related to Healthy Nutrition

Schools may choose to enhance these recommendations to meet local needs, health concerns, food preferences and dietary practices of the community.

Surroundings for Eating

School meals will be served in clean and pleasant settings. Adequate time to eat meals, and access to hand washing or hand sanitizing facilities before meals shall be provided.

Scheduling of Meals

Meals shall be scheduled at appropriate times, as near the middle of the day as possible, e.g., lunch should be scheduled between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's regulations specify that meals cannot be served before 10:00 a.m. or after 2:00 p.m. unless an exemption is requested from the State Department of Education.

Scheduled meal times should provide students with at least 10 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and 20 minutes to eat after sitting down for lunch. This time does not include the time needed to walk to the cafeteria from the classroom, select and pay for the meal, sit down at a table and walk back to the classroom after the meal. Activities such as tutoring, clubs or organizational meetings or activities should not be scheduled during meal times unless students may eat during such activities. For elementary grades, scheduling recess before lunch is recommended as an effective strategy to increase meal consumption and promote better behavior.

Schools should take reasonable steps to accommodate the tooth-brushing regimens of students with special oral health needs (e.g., orthodontia or high tooth decay risk).

Free and Reduced-Price Meals

USDA prohibits schools from making others in the cafeteria aware of the eligibility status of children for free, reduced-price or paid meals. Diocesan schools will make every effort to eliminate any social stigma attached to, and prevent the overt identification of, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals.

Financial Operation of Child Nutrition Programs

The school's food service program will strive to be financially self-supporting. Budget neutrality or profit generation should not take precedence over the nutritional needs of the

students. If additional funds are needed, they should not be from the sale of foods that have minimal nutritional value and/or compete nutritionally with program meals.

Qualifications of Food Service Staff Members

Qualified food service personnel will administer the school meal programs. All food service personnel shall have adequate pre-service training in food service operations. **Food service staff participating in the National School Lunch program will regularly participate in professional development activities that address requirements for child nutrition programs, menu planning and preparation, food safety, strategies for promoting healthy eating behaviors and other appropriate topics.**

Food Safety

All school food service operations and foods made available must comply with state and local food safety and sanitation regulations.

Federal HACCP Requirement: Section 111 of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265) amended section 9(h) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act by requiring school food authorities (SFA's) to implement a food safety program for the preparation and service of school meals served to children in the school year beginning July 1, 2005. The program must be based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles and conform to guidance issued by the Department of Agriculture (USDA). All SFA's must have a fully implemented food safety program that complies with HACCP principles or with this optional guidance no later than the end of the 2005-2006 school year.

Sharing of Foods and Food Allergies

Students will not share foods or beverages with one another during meal or snack times; given concerns with allergies and other restrictions on some children's diets.

Food Rewards and Punishment

Schools will not routinely use foods or beverages as rewards for academic performance or good behavior. Alternative rewards shall be developed and promoted. Schools shall not withhold food or beverages (including food served through school meals) as a punishment.

III. Staff Wellness and Healthy Environments

Staff Wellness

Health promotion services for all school staff members can positively affect their eating and physical behaviors as well as their effectiveness in teaching and modeling healthy behaviors. Schools should encourage all school staff members to improve their own personal health and wellness. Successful staff wellness promotion can aid in building a commitment to help improve the school nutrition and physical activity environment.

Schools should consider incorporating staff wellness programs as part of the school health team's responsibility. Many staff wellness programs are administered through the Employee Assistance Program and local hospital based wellness programs.

Consistent Health Messages

Students shall receive positive, motivating messages, about healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school environment. Foods and beverages sold or served at school should not contradict healthy eating messages.

Engaging Families

The schools will encourage partnering with community organizations such as the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, the Healthy Schools Program, Team Nutrition, Action for Healthy Kids, the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Council. Local nutritionists, health departments, colleges and health care providers. Relationships with the American Diabetic Association, American Heart Association and other community organizations are encouraged. These partnerships should help to provide consistent health messages and support educational strategies, which promote healthy eating and physical activity.

Food Marketing in Schools

School-based marketing of food and beverages should be consistent with nutrition education and health promotion. Schools should limit such marketing to the promotion of foods and beverages that meet the USDA nutrition standards for meals or the district's nutrition standards for foods and beverages. Schools shall promote healthy food choices and not allow advertising that promotes less nutritious food and beverage choices. The promotion of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products shall be encouraged.

IV. Policy Implementation and Outcome Measurement

The law requires that the district develop a plan for implementing, sustaining and measuring outcomes of the wellness policy. To ensure program success, accountability will rest on the diocesan wellness policy coordinator who will collaborate with local diocesan schools.

Diocesan Wellness Policy Coordinator

The district will designate one person, the diocesan wellness policy coordinator, with operational responsibility to ensure that all schools meet the policy. The district coordinator will provide support to the schools, to implement and sustain the wellness policy. This coordinator will communicate wellness policy, outcomes and feedback to the Office of Catholic Schools, school health advisory group, regional USDA representative, and principals.

The diocesan wellness coordinator will be responsible for guiding related curriculum developments. The district's health and physical education curriculum committees will regularly evaluate all nutrition and physical education curricula for accuracy and consistency with the district's wellness policy and current standards of practice. A professional school nurse will serve on each committee. Virginia's most recent health education standards of learning will be considered in this process.

School Health Team Formation

The school health team is responsible for providing and supporting a healthy school environment. Each school principal will designate a school health team and school health team coordinator. This coordinator will have operational responsibility for school implementation and evaluation of the diocesan wellness policy. School health team should include an administrator, food service team member, health education teacher, physical education teacher, school nurse parent representative from the PTO, a student, and a community representative. The school health team coordinator will report to the diocesan wellness policy coordinator.

It is recommended that each school utilize cited online resources to implement this policy such as:

Virginia Action for Healthy Kids (<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org>), Health Smart Virginia (<http://healthsmartva.pwnet.org>), and Eat Smart Move More North Carolina (www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com).

Schools should utilize TEAM Nutrition resources for education and meal program support at <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/library.html>.

A free School Food Allergy Program manual should be obtained at <http://www.foodallergy.org>, and kept in the school health office, as a guide in managing life threatening food allergies in school.

School Needs Assessment

An annual evaluation of local program progress shall be conducted to review program progress, recognize success and overcome obstacles that may arise. During this process the school health team may need to revise its individual action plan to accomplish goals. Evaluation tools may be used at the team's discretion.

Implementation

Each school health team will formulate an individual action plan to achieve the desired improvements. The action plan should identify; the specific actions needed to meet all policy objectives, the materials, resources and personnel needed for implementing each action, timelines for achieving each action, and methods to document accomplished actions.

For example;

- Students could be surveys on changes in healthy habits, eating choices, and a la carte options.
- Students could receive pre-and post-tests on health knowledge.
- Student body mass index data may be collected, keeping personally identifiable student health information confidential.

Evaluation and Measurable Outcomes

It is important to review program progress, recognize success and overcome obstacles that may arise. During this process the school health team may need to revise its individual action plan to accomplish goals. Evaluation tools may be used at the team's discretion. The school health team will also respond to the survey questions below regarding the implementation process. The team will summarize activities that took place, and describe how well the process worked. The questions below will provide a summary framework.

What changes to nutrition education, physical activity, the nutritional quality of foods available to students, and other aspects covered by the policy occurred in the school as a result of the district wellness policy?

- a. Did the number of students participating in nutrition education change?
- b. Did the students have a different number of minutes or physical activity?
- c. Did any of the campuses change available food options?
- d. Did participation in the National School Breakfast or Lunch Program change?

Did the policy and implementation address the issues identified in the needs assessment?

- a. Is it making a positive difference?
- b. What is working?
- c. What is not working?

How can the impact of the policy be increased to enhance its effect on student health and academic learning? Staff wellness and healthy environments?

The schools may also identify future plans to sustain policy implementation efforts. Specifics might include staff training, planning events and activities for the school community, expanding the team to include additional members, and addressing new issues.

An annual wellness program evaluation will be due to the district wellness coordinator by the 10th business day after the end of school in June. The Diocesan Wellness Coordinator will report its cumulative evaluation to the Office of Catholic Schools, school health advisory team, and principals. Details on district wide progress achieved, policy impact and future recommendations for policy revisions will be provided. The district coordinator will be the district liaison to the USDA, completing all USDA Food and Nutrition Service Mid-Atlantic Regional Office questionnaires and required communications.

Communication

Schools will help win support for healthy school environment strategies by informing the parents and community about its activities. Invite parents and families to participate as often as possible. Effective communication will also help the school gain recognition and encourage others to join the wellness team. Sustaining change requires a full team commitment to action from the school, district, parents and the community.

Leadership, commitment, communication and support are keys to local program success. A sustained effort will be necessary to meet the above guidelines in accordance with federal law.

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