

Section 29

Local Wellness Policy & Stakeholder Engagement

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Update Guide

February 14, 2025	Clarified information on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- General Requirements for a Local Wellness Policy
May 19, 2023	Created new <i>Definitions</i> and <i>Contact Information</i> sections, located at the beginning of the <i>Administrator's Reference Manual (ARM)</i> . Removed definitions and contact information from this section.
September 29, 2022	Updated <i>Section 29, Local Wellness Policy & Stakeholder Engagement</i> to correct minor typos. Clarified information on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Records retention- Triennial Assessment
August 12, 2020	Created <i>Section 29, Local Wellness Policy & Stakeholder Engagement</i> and updated the <i>Administrator's Reference Manual (ARM)</i> section references. Guidance for this new section was taken from the previous <i>Administrator's Reference Manual (ARM), Section 19, Other Operational Issues</i> . Clarified information on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Resources- Triennial assessment, COVID-19 flexibility- Written local wellness policy- Written implementation plan

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Local Wellness Policy & Stakeholder Engagement

Each contracting entity (CE) is required to develop, implement, and assess a local wellness policy (LWP). The LWP is intended to be a useful tool in establishing, evaluating, and maintaining a healthy school environment and promoting transparency to the public on key areas that affect each school's nutrition environment. The development of an LWP will include the involvement of students and parents as well as other key stakeholder groups.

The LWP must focus on nutrition education and promotion, physical activity, and school-based activities that promote student wellness. However, the CE may also include activities to promote wellness for parents, staff members, and the larger community.

Existing CEs

Existing CEs must update their local wellness policy each year as needed but are not required to submit a copy of updated local wellness policies to TDA. Existing CEs must conduct a triennial assessment of their LWP implementation.

New CEs

New CEs must create a local wellness policy before starting operation of a School Nutrition Program (SNP) and submit their LWP when completing their SNP application. After the first year of approval to operate a SNP, CEs must update their local wellness policy each year as needed but are not required to submit a copy of their updated local wellness policies to TDA. These CEs must also conduct a triennial assessment of their LWP implementation.

New CEs should work with their regional ESC child nutrition specialist in developing their LWP.

RCCIs

RCCIs should establish and follow a local wellness policy (LWP). However, promoting transparency to the public and engaging parents and community members may be difficult for RCCIs that only provide services to residential children/students or primarily residential children/students. In these cases, RCCIs should meet all requirements whenever possible, and document those situations that prevent the RCCI from fully implementing an LWP as required.

Guidance in this section applies to the following programs:

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
 - Afterschool Care Program (ASCP)
 - Seamless Summer Operation (SSO)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)

General Requirements for a Local Wellness Policy

There are three steps of a Local Wellness Policy:

1. Develop the policy,
2. Develop an implementation plan for that policy, and
3. Assess the implementation of that policy.

USDA provides a wide array of resources for developing a LWP on the Child Nutrition Sharing Site at www.theicn.org/cnss/. Type the words *local wellness policy* in the Resource Hub search box to find resources.

Step 1: Written Policy

The formal policy describes how the CE will address all local, state, and federal requirements.

The LWP must be approved and adopted by the local board of trustees or governing board. This policy must be reviewed each year and updated when there is a change in implementation practices or to address updated local, state, or federal requirements.

Step 2: Written Implementation Plan

The implementation plan describes how the CE will implement the written formal policies. The plan for implementation should be updated to meet emerging needs and priorities of the community in addition to addressing local, state, or federal requirements.

A written implementation plan may be a part of the CE's board policy or site policy or procedures, or it may be a free-standing plan.

Step 3: Assessment

CEs must establish a plan to assess the effectiveness of the policy's implementation. A Triennial Assessment is required at least every three years. For more information, see *Triennial Assessment* in this section.

Local Needs

Local wellness policies may also include additional policies that reflect the goals of the local community as long as those goals do not conflict with USDA or TDA regulations.

For Example: CE may include, but are not limited to, activities and goals that focus on promoting wellness for parents, community members, and school and CE staff.

Updated Local Wellness Policy

Each year the CE must review its local wellness policy. If changes are made to the policy, TDA recommends that the CE contact its ESC child nutrition specialist to ensure that the updated policy continues to meet the requirements before adding new policy or activities to its plan.

Required Elements of a Local Wellness Policy

The following guidance describes the required elements for an LWP and also indicates optional elements:

Structure

- **Must** apply to all schools participating in NSLP and/or SBP.
- **Must** be approved by the board of trustees or governing board.
- **May** customize the policy for different schools based on student age, facility, or other circumstances as long as the resulting LWP meets the requirements and does not conflict with federal and state regulations.

Nutrition Education and Promotion

Must address nutrition education and nutrition promotion through goals that address the following:

1. Activities that promote health, wellbeing, and students' ability to learn.
2. Nutritional guidelines for all food and beverages available to be sold **or** given to students on the school campus during the school day,¹ including food and beverages offered by the school nutrition program and outside of the school nutrition program. This includes fundraisers, school-sponsored activities, and nonschool-sponsored activities that take place during the school day on the school campus.

Must target students.

May also target parents, community members, and staff in nutrition education and promotion.

Stakeholder Engagement

Must engage the following stakeholders in developing and implementing the LWP:

- Administrators (district and/or school)
- Community members
- Parents
- Representatives of the CE or school(s)
- Representatives of the board of trustees or governing body
- School health professional
- School nutrition staff
- Students

May involve other stakeholder groups, including Supplement Assistance Program Education (SNAP-ED) coordinators.

Assigned Responsibilities

Must assign a staff position or positions to be responsible for the following tasks:

1. Development of the LWP
2. Implementation of the LWP
3. Assessment of the LWP
4. Update of the LWP

May assign one person to take responsibility for all tasks or **may** assign multiple people.

Marketing

Must describe how the following marketing issues will be addressed:

1. Current district marketing guidelines for foods and beverages sold to students.

Information Box 1

Marketing Definitions

What is marketing?

Marketing is the use of varied methods to promote the sale of a food or beverage.

What types or methods of marketing are covered in the requirements related to marketing?

Marketing methods includes, but is not limited to, oral, written, and graphic statements that appear on vending machines, posters, menu boards, tray liners, beverage cups, coolers, trash cans, digital marketing, food service supplies and equipment, or other items.

When and where do the marketing standards apply?

Marketing requirements apply to any food or beverage sold on the school campus during the school day for those schools operating NSLP and/or SBP.

When do the marketing standards not apply?

Marketing standards do not apply to materials used for classroom educational purposes; for schools that do not operate NSLP and/or SBP; product marketing that occurs outside of the school day; incentive program coupons for products that are not intended to be served during the school day; and label redemption programs such as Box Tops for Education which are brought from home.

¹ See *Administrator's Reference Manual (ARM)*, Section 22, *Competitive Foods* for additional information on food and beverages that can be sold or given away during the school day.

2. Strategies the CE will implement to ensure that, as of July 1, 2017, all marketing for foods and beverages sold to students on the school campus during the school day meets the Competitive Food Nutrition Standards.²

May immediately replace or eliminate items that display marketing information (including products with logos) that are not compliant with the Competitive Food Nutrition Standards.

Must establish a plan to ensure that all items that display marketing information obtained after July 1, 2017, are compliant with the Competitive Food Nutrition Standards.

Must establish a plan for replacing or eliminating all existing marketing displays and items with marketing information that are not compliant with the Competitive Food Nutrition Standards.

Triennial Assessment

Must establish a plan to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of its LWP at least every three years including, but not limited to, an assessment of the following:

1. compliance with its LWP
2. alignment to model, evidence-based LWPs³
3. progress made toward attaining the goals described in its LWP

Must distribute the results of the assessments to the public.

May assess the implementation of its LWP more frequently and may include other areas or issues in its assessment.⁴

Records Retention

Must establish a system to retain all records that demonstrate compliance with LWP requirements, including, but not limited to, stakeholder involvement, development, and implementation of the LWP, triennial assessments, public notifications, and marketing policy.⁵

Student/Parent Involvement

Regulations require schools⁶ to promote activities to involve students and parents in NSLP. This involvement includes activities to engage parents, teachers, and students in assisting in menu planning. CEs have flexibility in planning and implementing program activities that meet the needs of individual sites.

The following strategies and activities may help to encourage parental involvement:

- Prepare articles for local newspapers or student newsletters. Articles might feature menus, meal statistics, special activities, offer versus serve, or nutrition information.

² See the *Administrator's Reference Manual, Section 22, Competitive Foods* for additional information on this topic.

³ USDA provides resources on successful practices and best practices on the School Nutrition Environment and Wellness Resources website (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/implementation-tools-and-resources>).

⁴ A critical element of any assessment is the collection of data or information that is used for the assessment. Data or information about the LWP should be collected each year as part of the assessment. This includes, but is not limited to, number of participants in program activities, documentation of policy changes, and survey data about program impact.

⁵ See the *Records Retention* subsection in this section for additional information on this topic.

⁶ RCCIs are encouraged, but not required, to implement parental involvement strategies.

- Take pictures that can be shared with local newspapers or used in student newsletters. Pictures might demonstrate parent-involvement activities, students trying new foods or activities that might interest the public or parents.
- Plan special menus—
 - Menus to highlight special events, such as holidays or athletic victories
 - Menus to reflect the types of food eaten in foreign countries
 - Menus to reflect the types of food eaten in specific regions of the country
- Invite parents, grandparents, or other people in the community to have lunch at the site. The invitation can be an informal invitation to have lunch when it is convenient or a special event.
- Plan projects to improve the appearance of the cafeteria. This might include up-to-date bulletin boards, decorations for holidays or special events, or student artwork.
- Conduct student surveys on food likes and dislikes and solicit menu suggestions. Topics might include how to reduce plate waste, tasting events results, or other topics of interest for students.
- Work with educational staff to include nutrition activities and study in the classroom. These activities might include the following:
 - Student evaluation of menus based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* or an evaluation of meals for variety, texture, and color.
 - Student created menus using available food product list and meal pattern information.
 - Student developed brochures on nutritious snack foods.
 - Home economics classes planning which help to prevent weight gain or promote weight gain.
 - Student tasting panel for new products where students conduct product acceptability surveys.
 - Class tour of the kitchen.
 - Student research reports on nutrition relating to personal appearance and health.
- Engage parent/school organizations in menu planning or product taste testing.
- Reach out to other CEs to see what kinds of activities have been successful for them.
- Engage students in advisory groups to support program participation and promote good nutrition.

TDA provides the *Student/parent Involvement Activity Form* on the SquareMeals website to assist schools in tracking these types of activities.

Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

Youth Advisory Councils (YACs) are organizations composed of students and adult advisors who have the mutual goal of promoting good nutrition through the SNP. Members participate in nutrition-related projects and serve as a communication bridge between the SNP administration and the students and community.

Resources for Developing and Planning Local Wellness Policies

- Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention—The Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention provides resources and information specific to school health at www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/ and www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/npao/wellness.htm. They also provide resources for school health assessments at <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/shi/index.htm>.
- Institute of Child Nutrition—The Institute of Child Nutrition, formerly the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI), has created the *Resource to Sustain and Strengthen Local Wellness Initiatives* which is available at www.theicn.org.
- Texas Association of School Boards (TASB)—TASB has developed tools to assist CEs in developing their LWP and implementing their LWP. The tools are available at <https://www.tasb.org/services/policy-service/resources/student-health-and-wellness.aspx>.
- *USDA Team Nutrition*—USDA Team Nutrition provides a wide array of resources CEs can use in developing a local wellness policy and in sharing information about nutrition with students, parents, and larger community at www.fns.usda.gov/. USDA provides a list of resources at www.fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy as well as a wide array of resources for developing a LWP on the Child Nutrition Sharing Site at www.theicn.org/cnss/. Type the words *local wellness policy* in the Resource Hub search box to find resources.
- Alliance for Healthier Generation provides resources at www.healthiergeneration.org/.

Information Box 2

Record Retention

Public and charter schools are required to keep documentation related to school nutrition programs for five years.

Private schools, other nonprofit organizations, and residential childcare institutions (RCCIs) are required to keep documentation for three years.

TDA Forms

TDA has developed a checklist for developing a local wellness policy—*Local Wellness Policy (LWP) Checklist*. CEs are not required to use the checklist, but it does help the CE to ensure that all required elements are addressed in the CE's policy or implementation plan. The checklist is available at www.SquareMeals.org. The ESC child nutrition specialists may also use this form to provide technical assistance on the development of local wellness policies.

TDA provides the following forms on the SquareMeals website⁷ to assist CEs in implementing the guidance presented in this section:

- *Student-Parent Involvement Activity Form*

Records Retention

The CE is required to maintain an organized system of record retention that is accessible to appropriate CE staff members and federal or state reviewers. CEs also have the option to maintain records in paper or electronic form. The *Administrator's Reference Manual (ARM), Section 3, Records Retention* has additional information on the records CEs must retain.

CEs are required to retain documentation demonstrating compliance with the following:

- Written local wellness policy and implementation plan

⁷ Available at www.SquareMeals.org.

- Board of trustee or governing board approval
- Public notifications
- Stakeholder engagement
- Strategies to engage parents and students in menu planning
- Triennial assessment
- Marketing policy

Compliance

TDA will review documentation submitted through TX-UNPS, retained onsite during Administrative Reviews (ARs), or on request to ensure that the CE is compliant with the regulations described in this section. TDA may require an approvable corrective action plan if the CE does not comply these requirements.