

# What is Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP)

## FACT SHEET

A *LSWP* is “a written document that guides a local education agency’s (LEA) or school district’s efforts to establish a school environment that promotes students’ health, well-being, and ability to learn.”<sup>1</sup> LWSPs are required by federal law for all school districts (or LEAs) that participate in the National School Lunch Program and/or the School Breakfast Program, including any private schools, religious private schools, and charter schools participating in the school meals programs under its jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup> LEAs or school districts are responsible for developing the LSWP, and must designate the position title of LEA or school official(s) responsible for oversight of the policy at the individual school level.<sup>2</sup> Federal law requires that, at minimum, LEAs permit participation by the general public and the school community on the LSWP process, which includes the development, implementation, review, and update of the LSWP.<sup>2</sup> The California Department of Education plays an oversight role and is responsible for ensuring school district’s compliance with federal and state requirements for LSWPs.<sup>3</sup>

### WELL-CRAFTED AND PROPERLY IMPLEMENTED LSWPS SUPPORT STUDENT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

School environments students find themselves in affect their health. LSWPs can help institutionalize practices and standards that enhance students’ health and wellbeing. Studies show:

- **Physical Activity:**  
Frequent physical education and adequate recess time lead to higher levels of physical activity,<sup>4,5</sup> which is critical to obesity prevention.<sup>6,7</sup>
- **Nutrition:**  
School policies regulating nutrition standards have shown to support improvements in healthy eating behaviors including increased consumption of fruits and reduced fat and sodium intake among school-age children.<sup>8</sup>
- **Academic Performance:**  
Participation in programs promoting physical fitness increases academic performance in areas like test scores and attendance.<sup>9</sup>
- **Equity:**  
Students with low-income, students of color, and rural students are more likely to attend schools with limited physical education programs, outdated recreational equipment, or limited healthy food and beverage options.<sup>10</sup>

### LSWP IMPLEMENTATION: FEDERAL AND STATE STANDARDS

Federal regulations establish a series of minimum standards for LSWPs. They are intentionally vague so that states have the latitude to develop their own more stringent standards and mechanisms for implementation. The table below outlines federal and state standards for LSWPs that relate to nutrition (e.g., [Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards \[SSIS\]](#) - [bit.ly/2xzVdzW](https://bit.ly/2xzVdzW)) and physical activity [PA]).

### **Federal Standards ([bit.ly/33V0JY6](https://bit.ly/33V0JY6)) – LSWPs must include:**

- Specific goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness (LEAs must review and consider evidence-based strategies)
- Standards and nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages\* available on the school campus during the school day and that, for items sold, are consistent with [Federal regulations for school meals \(bit.ly/2UNUgMf\)](https://bit.ly/2UNUgMf) and SSIS
- Requirements for marketing and advertising of food and beverages on the school campus during the school day (only marketing of those foods and beverages that meet SSIS standards may be permitted)

### **State Standards (CA) ([bit.ly/2vZ956b](https://bit.ly/2vZ956b)) – LSWPs must reflect:**

- [Restrictions \(bit.ly/2JsiiqM\)](https://bit.ly/2JsiiqM) on marketing of unhealthy food choices ([CA Education Code 49431.9 - bit.ly/3bFQaM0](https://bit.ly/3bFQaM0))
- Required nutrition standards for food and beverages sold outside of school meals programs that do not meet SSIS for 1) [elementary schools \(bit.ly/2w1u60f\)](https://bit.ly/2w1u60f), 2) [middle schools \(bit.ly/3dGvm9Z\)](https://bit.ly/3dGvm9Z), and 3) [high schools \(bit.ly/3avXeLP\)](https://bit.ly/3avXeLP)
- Physical education (with an emphasis given to physical activity) curriculum requirements for 1) [elementary schools \(bit.ly/2QVNi6A\)](https://bit.ly/2QVNi6A), 2) [middle schools \(bit.ly/2ULVK9W\)](https://bit.ly/2ULVK9W), and 3) [high schools \(bit.ly/2w01sfQ\)](https://bit.ly/2w01sfQ)

\*CA Assembly Bill 746, which became effective January 1, 2018, required that all K-12 public schools constructed prior to January 1, 2010 have their water systems tested for lead levels by July 1, 2019.<sup>11</sup>

## **LSWP IMPLEMENTATION: STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

### **If you are a school board member:**

- Consider opportunities to add LSWP health and wellness components that go beyond minimum federal and state standards (e.g., provisions for parent and staff wellness; playground design; or Safe Routes to School<sup>12</sup>).
- Review opportunities to strengthen implementation and enforcement provisions (e.g., periodic reporting; establishing a review board with community representation).

### **If you are a parent, teacher, concerned clinician, or other community member:**

- Review your current LSWP (typically available on the school district website) and identify opportunities to expand existing provisions that promote healthy eating and active living
- Explore district- or school-level opportunities to join a wellness committee or school health advisory council that oversees and advises on LSWPs, particularly on effective implementation.
- Join or start a wellness team at your school to promote health and wellness activities.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Alliance for a Healthier Generation: LSWP Guidance and Model Policy Language](https://bit.ly/2wKBcXh) ([bit.ly/2wKBcXh](https://bit.ly/2wKBcXh))
- [CDC: Putting Local School Wellness Policies into Action](https://bit.ly/2QYavFp) (stories from school districts) ([bit.ly/2QYavFp](https://bit.ly/2QYavFp))
- [UConn's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity: LSWP resources](https://bit.ly/2Jos7G7) (including evaluation tools) ([bit.ly/2Jos7G7](https://bit.ly/2Jos7G7))
- [ChangeLab Solutions Fact Sheet: Restricting Food and Beverage Marketing in Schools](https://bit.ly/2UP1L5r) ([bit.ly/2UP1L5r](https://bit.ly/2UP1L5r))

List of references available online at [championprovider.ucsf.edu/references](https://championprovider.ucsf.edu/references).

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