

Road Map for Getting Started with LOCAL SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY (LSWP)

The Champion Provider Fellowship is funded by CalFresh Healthy Living through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the California Department of Public Health Oral Health Program. CalFresh Healthy Living promotes healthy food choices and physical activity consistent with the most recent *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. In order to achieve this, we align our work with and support efforts to address social determinants of health. Our three-year plan calls for putting our work in the context of specific, locally determined need, leading with and encouraging sustained community engagement in planning and implementation, and embedding partnership/coalition work across every strategy. The Oral Health Program strives to improve the oral health of Californians also through prevention, education, and organized community efforts.

The Road Map for Getting Started with LSWPs provides a set of steps that Champion Provider Fellows can take, and useful background information to ensure adequate implementation of LSWPs or to initiate improvements to existing LSWPs. In addition to the Road Map, other resources in the LSWP Implementation Toolkit, namely the modifiable PowerPoint *Slide Deck* with talking points and the *Fact Sheet*, provide Fellows with resources that will help them to jump start their work on LSWP initiatives.

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BACKGROUND

This section provides a brief introduction to 1) policy, system, and environmental (PSE) change, 2) local school wellness policies (LSWP), and 3) PSE and LSWPs.

What is Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP)?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines [local school wellness policy \(LSWP\)](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-education-and-promotion/food-education-and-promotion-act/2010/2010-act-10101) ([bit.ly/33VOJY6](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-education-and-promotion/food-education-and-promotion-act/2010/2010-act-10101)) as “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.” LSWPs 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. The LSWP must be established for all schools participating in these programs under their jurisdiction, including any private schools, religious private schools, and charter schools participating in the school meals programs. However, [according to guidance from the USDA](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-education-and-promotion/food-education-and-promotion-act/2010/2010-act-10101) ([bit.ly/3bHLR3T](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-education-and-promotion/food-education-and-promotion-act/2010/2010-act-10101)), “Any schools, including private and non-public charter schools, that do not participate in the school meals programs, may develop their own wellness policy Such schools are not required to follow the local school district’s LSWP.” The LEA or school district is responsible for developing the LSWP, in part so that they maintain the flexibility to address the unique needs of the schools under their jurisdiction. Each LSWP must designate an identified school official(s) that is responsible for implementation and oversight of the policy at the individual school level (referred to as “local leadership”). LEAs are also federally required to measure and make available to the public an assessment on the implementation of the LSWP every three years, and to notify the public on an annual basis about progress made and any updates to the LSWP. Federal law also 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. 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. LEAs must make available to the public the LSWP, any updates to and about the policy on an annual basis, and the triennial assessment, which includes progress toward meeting LSWP goals. Given these requirements, a key aspect of successful LSWP implementation and compliance is spreading information about the policy to the general public so that they can hold LEAs accountable for what is outlined in each policy.

Introduction to Policy, System, and Environmental (PSE) Change

PSE change interventions that affect the upstream causes of health are vital to creating healthy communities across California. The [PSE Playbook](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-education-and-promotion/food-education-and-promotion-act/2010/2010-act-10101) ([bit.ly/36JGGhk](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-education-and-promotion/food-education-and-promotion-act/2010/2010-act-10101)) provides definitions of each level of PSE change and then highlights the differences between each. Fellows can refer to pages 3 and 4 of the PSE Playbook for more information on PSE change.

PSE and LSWPs

LSWPs can engage all three levels of PSE change

LSWPs provide a mechanism for stakeholders to engage with local school districts to create healthier policies, systems, and environments for the school community.

A LSWP is a great potential vehicle for PSE change because it can set goals, require procedural changes, create long term accountability via assessment and public reporting, and lay out a framework/series of projects to justify requests for financial support from various entities (e.g., from health insurance providers, community based organizations, government agencies, and private foundations).

Here are some examples of how LSWP components advance PSE change:

- **Policy Change:** Adoption of a healthy vending policy.
- **System Change:** Change to the school schedule to allow more recess time and breaks that promote opportunities for physical activity.
- **Environmental Change:** Increase in the number and attractiveness of clean water stations on campus.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF CHAMPION PROVIDER FELLOWS IN LSWP PSE CHANGE?

There are many ways that Champion Provider Fellows can interact with communities to bring about PSE change through LSWPs. The role that Champion Provider Fellows play may differ based on the community and nature of the intervention. It is important to always prioritize listening to community needs when engaging in community change efforts.

The PSE Playbook includes a discussion of potential roles Fellows can play to support PSE change on page 6. In the context of LSWP work, Champion Provider Fellows will often play the roles of:

- **Team expert** by joining an existing collaboration or partnership, providing subject matter expertise on issues related to LSWPs and student health and wellbeing, or advising on how to measure outcomes;
- **Educator** by sharing information with key decision-makers on the health-promoting benefits of a specific policy, decision, or change related to a LSWP;
- **Amplifier** by writing, speaking, blogging, or being interviewed about an issue related to LSWPs or by providing support for efforts to ensure adequate implementation of LSWPs.

PSE KEY ELEMENTS APPLIED TO LSWPS

The PSE Playbook outlines 7 key elements of PSE change on pages 9-15. Below we highlight considerations for each element as applied to LSWPs.

1. Define Problems/Goals/Outcome Measures

- Consult with the local community, including parents and students, school leaders, and local health departments (LHDs), among others, to define problems, goals, and outcome measures to ensure a shared vision and commitment to student health and wellbeing.
- Consider working with LHDs and/or the local school district to gain insights on student context, to gather relevant data on student behavioral and health outcomes, and to be connected with other stakeholders. California LHDs are required to work on health in the learning environment as part of their 2020-2022 scope of work. Relevant data to

LSWPs include child obesity rates, student physical activity rates, sugar-sweetened beverage consumption rates, and details on the nutritional eating and active living opportunities made available in schools.

2. Understand the Current PSE Landscape

- Read your school district's LSWP (typically available on the district's website) and relevant [state and federal laws \(bit.ly/2vZ956b\)](https://www.bit.ly/2vZ956b) that relate to LSWP standards and requirements.
 - Identify relevant stakeholders (don't forget those who could be involved in after/outside school programming). Stakeholders may include students, parents, teachers, school administrators, the school board, school health staff, community advocates, local residents, community groups and nonprofits, LHDs, elected officials and local businesses, among others.

3. Outline a Clear Strategy for Engagement

- Determine if new provisions in the LSWP are needed and/or if better implementation of an existing LSWP is necessary.
- Develop a clear strategy for implementing the PSE change related to LSWPs or for supporting improved implementation of an existing LSWP.
- Tailor the strategy to the community's goals, so that interventions are appropriately matched to address the problem(s) you have identified as a community.
- Develop an action plan to help lay out the steps needed to achieve your goals. The action plan can clarify the roles that Fellows and others play in supporting the strategy, establish a timeline, and determine what resources are needed to implement the PSE intervention related to LSWPs.

4. Mobilize Partners

- Identify the constellation of individuals, groups, agencies, etc. that should collaborate to achieve shared goals around LSWPs (e.g., school board members, parents/caregivers, students, LSWP working groups/committees, LHDs, local nutrition and physical activity advocates, nonprofits, etc.)
 - Partners are key to gaining traction and momentum towards goals. They can provide resources and other supports in terms of shared knowledge and insights into LSWP interventions. Refer to page 13 of the PSE Playbook for more details on what makes up a successful partnership.

5. Educate the Public and Key Decision-Makers

- Use the LSWP Implementation Toolkit *Fact Sheet* and *Slide Deck* to educate the public and key decision-makers about LSWPs and the need for intervention to address

concerns and/or to take advantage of opportunities for improving student health and well-being via improved implementation of existing LSWPs.

- Educate the general public (especially the school community) and key decision-makers about the need for PSE change to promote more comprehensive LSWPs in order to build support for your initiative. It's important to remember that as healthcare providers, you are trusted members of the community, and you can play a vital role in bringing attention to critical health issues, such as obesity, and educating decision-makers about necessary change.
- Educate audiences in multiple ways, including through the use of media to raise awareness of strategies, by presenting at public meetings and providing formal comments or testifying at public hearings, and reviewing and providing comments on public documents related to LSWPs (e.g., triennial assessments of LSWPs, annual updates to the LSWP, etc.).

6. Monitor and Determine Whether Success Has Been Achieved

- Establish measures of success—both for process outcomes and health outcomes associated with implementation—of your LSWP initiative. This will require establishing standards for measurement and review, and incorporation of community input at every possible stage of the process.
- Provide support to partners—including LHDs, school leaders, and community members—all of whom can offer support in the identification of measures of success, with ongoing tracking of progress and setbacks, and the dissemination of information to the general public.
 - Measures of success can vary depending on the priorities of a community. Specific metrics a community may choose to focus on in their evaluation may include those that help them measure progress made in attaining the goals outlined in their LSWP (e.g., improvements in school physical fitness test results over time, an increase in the number of events or activities related to wellness policy implementation at each school, total number of water stations installed in schools across a district, the number of community partnerships formed to support active transportation efforts at local schools, etc. It is important to collect data before and after the activity (e.g., adoption of a revised LSWP) in order to identify any changes that have occurred.

7. Take Stock and Level Up

- Consider how you can build on successes as you progress through your action plan and achieve various milestones, and identify where you can fill in gaps, and how you can adapt when specific efforts are not working. Again here, continuous input from community partners is critical to identifying areas for improvement.

KEY AUDIENCES

This section provides an introduction on how to engage key audiences – namely school board members and city council members - regarding LSWPs. Before exploring specific considerations for each audience, the section outlines a set of guiding principles that apply broadly to all key stakeholders.

Guiding Principles for Interacting with Key Stakeholders

Whether you are speaking with members of your local school board, an established LSWP committee that includes members of the public, or other critical audiences, the following guiding principles will help you maximize the limited time you have to present your issue to key decision-makers.

Educate Your Audience about LSWP Initiatives

- Identify whom you will need to address. Look to the LSWP for guidance on the proper points of contact. Depending on your strategy, these may include:
 - The school board
 - School wellness coordinators
 - Advisory boards and district committees
 - Teachers and parents
 - Other community stakeholders and partners
- Understand the evidence base for adopting new provisions and/or strengthening implementation of an existing LSWP to support child health. For example, be prepared to speak to the meaningful increase in the number of students who regularly walk to or from school as a result of LSWP interventions that promote active transportation. Rely on the LSWP Implementation Toolkit *Fact Sheet* and *Slide Deck* for relevant data and talking points to highlight in your conversation.
- Highlight existing inequities in your community. Are segments of the local population disproportionately impacted by lack of access to healthy food options and/or opportunities for active living in their home and school environments (most often youth with low-income, rural youth, and youth of color)? Are these same segments of the population also disproportionately impacted by lack of enforcement of an existing LSWP?
- Connect these existing inequities in the lived environment to local health inequities and poor health outcomes associated with poor diet and physical inactivity, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and dental decay infection. This is an opportunity to integrate your patient stories about how this issue impacts the patient population you serve and how LSWP-related PSE change can help alleviate these inequities.

Craft Your Message in Partnership with Others

- Work with your partners to fine tune your messaging and provide relevant context to the issue.
- Lift up the lived experiences of community members.
- Refer back to the Champion Provider Fellowship [media training \(bit.ly/2PB8Rcq\)](https://bit.ly/2PB8Rcq) and [messaging workshop \(bit.ly/2S7D2d2\)](https://bit.ly/2S7D2d2) for more tips on crafting your message.
- Consider having your partners also present with you.

Anticipate Questions, Reservations, and Requests for More Information

- Put yourself in the shoes of your audience to anticipate the types of questions and reservations they may have (e.g., concerning limited funding, liability, child safety, limitations with enforcement, etc.).
- It's important to be honest and direct about the resource constraints that many schools and school districts face and to be sensitive to these realities.
- Review the LSWP resources you've gathered to comb through FAQ's that may be relevant to your audience. Highlight, for example, challenges other districts and communities have faced, as well as how they overcame them.
- Share case studies from other schools and communities that have successfully made improvements to their LSWPs or enhanced enforcement of their LSWPs. Look to the PSE Playbook and the LSWP Implementation Toolkit *Slide Deck* for some initial examples.
- Be prepared to leave behind a resource for the interested stakeholder to learn more (e.g., the LSWP Implementation Toolkit *Fact Sheet*).

Own Your Role as a Trusted Community Leader

- Do not be afraid to leverage your trusted position as a physician in the community to educate your audience on the advantages of adopting stronger measures that support health, especially the health of children.

Engaging Your Audience: School Board Members

Do your homework:

- Review the existing LSWP to understand potential gaps and opportunities where language can be made stronger to explicitly support healthy eating and active living in schools.
 - Has the school district recently completed its assessment of the LSWP for compliance, effectiveness, and progress?
 - If so, review the assessment for identified gaps and opportunities for improvement, including via improved implementation.
- Seek to understand school board members' perspectives and opinions on LSWPs.

- Consider scheduling in-person meetings or phone calls with school board members to have a better understanding of their perspectives, including areas of concern and excitement, in order to begin to identify potential allies and roadblocks.
- You can usually find publicly available contact information for school board members on the school district’s website.
- If you are struggling to find time with a school board member, consider reaching out to the school superintendent. They work closely with the board on policy issues and sometimes are specifically tasked with suggesting new policies and revisions to existing policies that address issues affecting the community. They can be a key ally to get your issue on the radar of the school board.
- Consider presenting your issue at a school board meeting.
 - Because the process for placing an item on a school board meeting agenda varies among districts, you should consult your local school district website to understand the procedures in your district. The frequency of school board meetings also vary by district, but many hold at least two meetings a month. There may also be opportunities to comment on items outside of the meeting agenda – again here, it’s helpful to consult your local district website to understand how to sign up for these open public comment opportunities. Expect your time to speak to be limited to 2-3 minutes. Finally, you should consider attending a school board meeting in advance to get a sense of the meeting’s flow and the dynamics of the room to feel more comfortable presenting in the future.

Be clear about your specific request

- Be straightforward in communicating the purpose of your interaction with school board members:
 - If it involves changes to language in the LSWP to promote healthy eating and active living, how is what you are requesting different from what currently exists in the LSWP? Be prepared to present data on the benefits and describe the consequences of non-action.
 - If it involves enhancing implementation and enforcement of an existing LSWP, what role are you asking the school district to take on?
- Be prepared to educate school board members on the evidence-base around specific strategies. For example, if you are educating school board members on the health benefits of more stringent food and beverage standards, what, if any, evidence exists to support such a restriction?

- The Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN) has [resources on developing and implementing school wellness policies \(bit.ly/2yqgQWX\)](https://bit.ly/2yqgQWX).
- Additional guidance and evidence on school-based interventions for student wellness is available on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's webpage on LSWPs \(bit.ly/3dww9tX\)](https://bit.ly/3dww9tX).
- [The Rudd Center \(bit.ly/3bKZEXr\)](https://bit.ly/3bKZEXr) also produces and makes available a variety of resources relating to school wellness.
- Attempt to determine whether any resistance to your recommendations are related to lack of consensus regarding the potential change and/or concern about available resources to implement the change.
- Be realistic about a potential timeline for change. Ask the school board members when they next plan to review and update their wellness policy. Although your efforts should not be limited to this window of time, it can be helpful to know what their anticipated timeline for potential change is to help gauge receptivity to your request.

PREPARATION FOR COMMON BARRIERS AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

School wellness activities (and schools generally) are often limited by the availability of resources and the perceived need to choose between competing priorities. Submitting a request that a school district expands its LSWP-related offerings to promote opportunities for healthy eating and active living may seem unrealistic given this context. However, effective changemakers will come prepared to address these challenges. This aligns with the *Mobilizing Partners* step of PSE strategy. Partners in this work, for example, can use community engagement activities as opportunities to make connections that develops a shared vision, leverages resources, relative advantages, and matches strengths with opportunities.

Resources for capacity support for expanded school wellness activities include:

- [Action for Healthy Kids](https://bit.ly/2UB97uJ) (bit.ly/2UB97uJ) provides grants to schools to help them accomplish their student wellness goals.
- [Active Schools](https://bit.ly/2ypnSrP) (bit.ly/2ypnSrP) list available grants from their partner organizations.
- [Fuel Up to Play 60](https://bit.ly/2X5v6vv) (bit.ly/2X5v6vv) offers grants to K-12 schools interested in improving their healthy eating and physical activity opportunities.
- [SHAPE America](https://bit.ly/2XoNsNR) (bit.ly/2XoNsNR) offers grants to schools to enhance health and physical education programs
- [Chef Ann Foundation](https://bit.ly/2UyAju4) (bit.ly/2UyAju4) provides various resources and programs to help schools improve their healthy eating options.
- [SPARK PE](https://bit.ly/33YY6WU) (bit.ly/33YY6WU) created a grant-finder tool to help groups identify funding opportunities to address nutrition and physical activity issues in schools.
- [SNAP-ED 2020-2022 guidance](https://bit.ly/3dK6f6d) (bit.ly/3dK6f6d) requires California local health departments (LHDs) to work on health in the learning environment. LHDs can serve as a critical partner whose strengths and resources can be leveraged to advance LSWP efforts.
- [Alliance for a Healthier Generation: LSWP](https://bit.ly/2wKBcXh) (bit.ly/2wKBcXh) offers resources and guidance on 1) updating a LSWP and 2) properly implementing the LSWP to support child health in school settings.

The Champion Provider Fellowship empowers, trains and supports doctors and dentists to use their expertise and respected voices to improve the health of communities through local policy, systems and environmental changes.

Learn more at championprovider.ucsf.edu

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