

Local School Wellness Policy *Guide for Development*



May 2005
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Office of Healthy Schools



Local School Wellness Policy

Guide for Development

To support the relationship between student health and academic achievement, the 2007 Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards (Standard 37.2) and the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (PL # 108-265) requires each local school to establish a local school wellness policy. Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated Section 37-13-134 requires the recommendations made by a school health council to be based on a coordinated approach to school health. This guide has been revised, as of May 2008, to support local schools in their development to meet state and federal requirements. The Office of Healthy Schools is committed to supporting academic achievement through school health programs that ensure every child has the opportunity to be fit, healthy and ready to succeed.

The following minimum requirements are established by the federal legislation. This law places responsibility of developing a school wellness policy at the local level, so individual needs of each school can be addressed most effectively. States and schools may choose to require or add additional components. Specifically, the federal legislation requires:

- **Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the local education agency determines is appropriate;**
- **Nutrition guidelines selected by the local educational agency for all foods available on each school campus under the local educational agency during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity;**
- **Assurances that guidelines for reimbursable school meals are not less restrictive than the regulations issued by the USDA;**
- **Ways of measuring how well the school wellness policy is being implemented, including designation of one or more persons at each school with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school is meeting the policy;**
- **Involvement of parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board and school administrators, and the public, in developing the wellness policy.**

To assist Mississippi schools in complying with these state and federal requirements, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has identified a three-step approach to developing an effective local school wellness policy, along with sample language for a policy. This Local School Wellness Policy Guide for Development includes all the minimum requirements necessary to comply with the federal law, as well as existing Mississippi statutes and standards. It also offers additional policy options that schools are encouraged to utilize in developing their specific goals.

Three Steps to an Effective School Wellness Policy

This three-step process is designed to meet the state and federal requirements for a school wellness policy – and to support student health and academic achievement in Mississippi schools.

Step 1: Gather input and assess current situation.

At a minimum, the state and federal legislation requires that parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board and school administrators, and the public, be involved in developing a local wellness policy. Input can be coordinated through an existing school committee, like a Health Committee, or School Health Council. **Download listing of required members to serve on School Health Councils at:**

[HTTP://www.healthyschoolsms.org/ohs_main/initiatives/school_wellness_policy.htm](http://www.healthyschoolsms.org/ohs_main/initiatives/school_wellness_policy.htm).

Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated Section 37-13-134 requires the establishment of School Health Councils (SHC). The SHC is one of the most efficient and effective ways to gather the necessary local input for a school wellness policy, as well as to address the overall health concerns within a local school. The SHC can also play a leadership role in determining the goals for a school wellness policy and in the successful implementation of the policy once it is developed. For more information on establishing a School Health Council, visit www.healthyschoolsms.org/ohs_main/councils.htm.

Local stakeholders can be invited to join School Health Councils – to provide necessary resources and assist schools in developing appropriate, science-based wellness policies. The following list contains the minimum requirements for members of local school health councils; other key stakeholders should be added as necessary. These councils must make recommendations based on a coordinated approach to school health. For more information on a coordinated approach to school health, go to www.healthyschoolsms.org/ohs_main/powerpoint.htm.

- **Healthcare providers**, especially pediatricians, dietitians, public health professionals, dentists, and orthodontists
- **Hospitals and public health departments**, especially those with pediatric services and diabetes clinics
- **Non-profit health organizations**, like the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association, and American Heart Association
- **Physical activity groups**, like YMCA/YWCA, youth sports leagues, and commercial fitness centers
- **Community youth organizations**, like Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy/Girl Scouts of America, and faith-based groups for young people
- **University departments and other government agencies**, especially those involved in nutrition, physical activity, and education (e.g., Mississippi State University Extension Service)
- **Faith-based organizations, clergy, and churches**
- **Parents** who have children in the individual school
- **Teachers** employed in the individual school
- **Students** enrolled in the individual school

Before establishing the required goals and guidelines, schools are required to gather baseline information and determine what changes are appropriate for their local situation. This assessment can be done using tools developed especially for schools, including:

- **Mississippi School Nutrition and Physical Activity Environment Assessment**
www.healthyschoolsms.org/docs/Environment_Assessment.doc
- **CDC's School Health Index**
<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/>

Guidelines for Mississippi School Health Councils

1. School Health Councils must meet a minimum of three times per year.
2. School Health Councils must maintain minutes for each meeting for documentation.
3. A minimum of one presentation per year must be made to the local school board for approval of all school wellness policies.

Step 2: Develop and approve a School Wellness Policy.

Once local input has been gathered, schools can develop goals and guidelines to address their specific situation. For assistance in drafting an effective policy, schools may utilize the following guide and sample language provided by the Mississippi Department of Education, along with other resources as needed.

Goals and guidelines can be developed to best fit the needs and concerns of each local school – and they should be adapted over time. As the initial goals are met, new nutrition and physical activity goals can be chosen by the School Health Council with community input. Guidelines for food in schools may also be strengthened over time – if a step-wise or gradual approach is most appropriate in a local school.

Additional federal guidance from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and sample wellness policies from around the U.S. are available at: www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy.html.

Once a local school wellness policy has been developed, school board approval must be obtained using all appropriate and legal timelines and procedures. The federal Child Nutrition legislation does require that any local educational agency participating in USDA school meals programs must establish a local wellness policy by the beginning of school year 2006-2007.

Step 3: Implement and evaluate a School Wellness Policy.

Approving a School Wellness Policy is just the first step toward creating an environment that supports student health and academic achievement. The federal legislation also requires a plan for measuring the implementation and evaluation of the policy, including the designation of one or more persons with the responsibility for ensuring the school meets minimum guidelines.

A School Health Council (SHC) can also be useful in the implementation and evaluation process. In order to insure a smooth and consistent implementation of a locally approved policy, the SHC can help to educate the school and community about the requirements for a policy – and its importance for children in Mississippi schools. It can also be involved in measuring progress towards local goals related to nutrition, physical activity, and student wellness.

Local School Wellness Policy

The purpose of this guide is to provide sample language for schools to use in developing their own local policies. It is based on existing state requirements and USDA guidance as of May 2008, and on the experiences of successful schools in Mississippi and around the United States.

This guide contains both minimum requirements and optional policy statements. **The minimum requirements, based on federal and state legislation and standards, must be included in any School Wellness Policy adopted by Mississippi schools.** Schools are encouraged to review the optional policy statements, based on the best practices from other schools, and to adopt those that meet the goals of their schools and communities.

This guide is not intended for adoption in its entirety by schools, unless they so choose. It is intended for schools to use as a tool in drafting their own policies. With the exception of the minimum requirements, schools may choose to alter this guide, based on community input, to address local concerns and meet local needs.



This eight-component model of a coordinated approach to school health, developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, depicts the importance of leadership, coordination, and partnerships to successfully implement quality school health programs that provide opportunities for all children to be fit, healthy, and ready to succeed.

Local School Wellness Policy

Rationale:

The link between health of students and learning is well documented. If children are to be successful in school they cannot be tired, hungry, sick, suffering from drug abuse, or worried that school is an unsafe environment in which they could become a victim of a violent act. It has become apparent that problems such as poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, substance abuse, depression, teen pregnancy, obesity, bullying, and more – can adversely affect not only a child’s health, but also his or her *ability to learn!* And that is precisely why a coordinated approach to school health can make a difference! A coordinated approach to school health improves kids’ health and their capacity to learn through the support of families, schools, and communities working together. At its very core, a coordinated approach to school health is about keeping students healthy over time, reinforcing positive healthy behaviors throughout the school day, and making it clear that *good health and learning go hand in hand.*

Goal:

All students in Hazlehurst City School District shall possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy choices that promote healthy lifestyles. All staff in Hazlehurst City School District are encouraged to model healthful eating and physical activity as a valuable part of daily life.

To meet this goal, the Hazlehurst City School District adopts this school wellness policy with the following commitments to implementing a coordinated approach to school health. This policy is designed to effectively utilize school and community resources and to equitably serve the needs and interests of all students and staff, taking into consideration differences in culture.

Commitment to Nutrition

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Offer a school lunch program with menus that meet the meal patterns and nutrition standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition Programs.
- Offer school breakfast and snack programs (where approved and applicable) with menus that meet the meal patterns and nutrition standards established by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition Programs.
- Promote participation in school meal programs to families and staff.
- Operate all Child Nutrition Programs with school foodservice staff who are properly qualified according to current professional standards (Mississippi Board of Education Policy, Code EE-2E).
- Follow State Board of Education policies on competitive foods and extra food sales (Mississippi Board of Education Policy, Code EEH).
- Implement Nutrition Standards as adopted by the State Board of Education in accordance with the Mississippi Healthy Students Act (State Board of Education Policy 4011), www.healthyschoolsms.org/MSHealthyStudentsAct.htm.
 - Healthy food and beverage choices;
 - Healthy food preparation;
 - Marketing of healthy food choices to students and staff;
 - Food preparation ingredients and products;
 - Minimum/maximum time allotted for students and staff lunch and breakfast;
 - Availability of food items during the lunch and breakfast periods of the Child Nutrition Breakfast and Lunch Programs;
 - Methods to increase participation in the Child Nutrition School Breakfast and Lunch Programs.
- Establish guidelines in accordance with the Mississippi Beverage and Snack Regulations for all foods available on the school campus during the school day with the objective of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.
- Encourage students to make food choices based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, by emphasizing menu options that feature baked (rather than fried foods), whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and reduced-fat dairy products.
- Establish a cafeteria environment conducive to a positive dining experience, with socializing among students and between students and adults; with supervision of eating areas by adults who model proper conduct and voice level; and with adults who model healthy habits by eating with the students.
- Replace deep fat fryers with combination oven steamers.

- Schedule recess before lunch, in order to increase meal consumption and nutrient intake at meals and to improve behavior in the dining area.
- Provide nutrition information for parents, including nutrition analysis of school meals and resources to help parents improve food that they serve at home.
- Add nutritious and appealing options (such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, trail mix, beef jerky, reduced-fat milk, reduced fat-yogurt, reduced-fat cheese, 100% juice, and water) whenever foods/beverages are sold or otherwise offered at school, including vending machines, school stores, concession stands at sporting and academic events, parties, celebrations, social events, and other school functions. Download nutrition guidelines at www.healthyschoolsms.org/ohs_main/initiatives/school_wellness_policy.htm.
- Eliminate use of foods as rewards for student accomplishment and the withholding of food as punishment (e.g., restricting a child's selection of flavored milk at mealtime due to behavior problems). Non-food reward ideas can be downloaded at www.healthyschoolsms.org/ohs_main/initiatives/school_wellness_policy.htm.
- Encourage all school-based organizations to use services, contests, non-food items, and/or healthful foods for fundraising programs. The sale of candy as a fund-raiser is strongly discouraged (or prohibited). Alternative fundraising ideas can be downloaded at www.healthyschoolsms.org/ohs_main/initiatives/school_wellness_policy.htm.

Commitment to Food Safe Schools

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Implement a food safety program based on HACCP principles for all school meals, as required by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition Programs and ensure that the food service permit is current for the school site.
- Develop a food safety education plan for all staff and students, consistent with Fight Bac (www.fightbac.org) and other national standards for safe food handling at home and in school.
- Ensure that all staff have viewed the video developed by the Office of Healthy Schools to support food safety on the school campus.
- All school personnel (school board members, administrators, teachers, school nurses, instructional and health services paraprofessionals, foodservice staff, custodians and facilities managers, and administrative support staff) will receive copies of the Local School Wellness Policy.
- The food safety assurance plan must address strategies that minimize risks for students and staff who have food allergies and intolerances.

Commitment to Physical Activity

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Provide physical education for all students (in accordance with Section 37-13-134, Mississippi Code of 1972, ann., reference 2004 Mississippi Public Schools Accountability Standards 32, Appendix B and 33).
- Provide Physical Education/Activity in accordance with the Physical Education Rules and Regulations as approved by the State Board of Education in compliance with the Mississippi Healthy Students Act (State Board of Education Policy 4012).
- Offer a planned sequential program of physical education instruction incorporating individual and group activities, which are student centered and taught in a positive environment.
- Implement the requirements of the Mississippi Healthy Students Act of 2007 (Senate Bill 2369).
- Schedule recess (or physical education) before lunch times in order to increase food consumed, decrease plate waste, and improve cafeteria behavior.
- Participate in a yearly fitness test for all students (e.g., Fitness Gram® www.fitnessgram.net/ or President's Challenge to Physical Fitness www.presidentschallenge.org).
- Establish or enhance physical activity opportunities (like walking clubs or fitness challenges) for staff and/or parents.
- Provide staff-monitored recreational activities that promote moderate physical activity during all outdoor and indoor recess times.
- Encourage active transportation to/from schools by assessing the safest routes for students to walk or bike to school.
- Collaborate with local recreational departments and youth fitness programs to promote participation in lifelong physical activities.
- Create opportunities for students to voluntarily participate in before- and after-school physical activity programs like intramurals, clubs, and at the secondary level, interscholastic athletics.

Commitment to Comprehensive Health Education

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Provide ½ Carnegie unit of comprehensive health education for graduation (2004 Mississippi Public School Accountability Standard 20, Appendix A).
- Implement the requirements of the Mississippi Healthy Students Act of 2007, which requires 45 minutes per week of health education instruction as defined by the State Board of Education for grades K through 8.
- Graduation requirements for 9th through 12th grade students shall include ½ Carnegie unit in physical education.
- Emphasize the disease and prevention strand in the 2006 Mississippi Comprehensive Health Framework.
- Participate in USDA nutrition programs such as *Team Nutrition Schools* and the *Healthier U.S. School Challenge*. The school will conduct nutrition education activities and promotions that involve students, parents, and the community. The school team responsible for planning nutrition activities will include school foodservice staff, school nurses, health and PE teachers, coaches, and additional staff, as appropriate.

- Integrate Health Education into other subject areas (www.healthyschoolsms.org-Health in Action).
- Provide positive, motivating messages, both verbal and non-verbal, about healthy lifestyle practices throughout the school setting. All school personnel will help reinforce these positive messages.
- Promote healthful eating, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community at school events (e.g., school registration, parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, open house, and other events).
- Eliminate advertising and other materials on the school campus that promote foods of minimal nutrition value.
- Provide students with quality disease prevention instruction based on the Comprehensive Health Education Framework and other selected materials approved by the district.
- Involve students in planning for a healthy school environment.
- Work with local media, such as newspaper, TV, and radio to inform the community about health problems facing Mississippi Children, as well as the need for and benefits of healthy school environments.

Commitment to a Healthy School Environment

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Ensure that there are no pad locks or chains on exit doors; exits should never be obstructed (in accordance with Mississippi State Fire Code). Ensure that all exit signs are illuminated and clearly visible.
- Ensure that all chemicals are stored properly (in accordance with the Material Safety Data Sheet www.msdssearch.com).
- Refer to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Handbook for Public Playground Safety (www.cpsc.com); for federal guidelines for playground safety.
- Ensure that fire extinguishers are inspected each year and properly tagged.
- Complete yearly maintenance of the heating and cooling system in your school; check coils, filters, belts, etc. in order to maintain safe operation and healthy air quality.
- Conduct at least one emergency evacuation drill per month.
- Ensure that two means of egress are available in each classroom in case of an emergency; if there is only one door, designate a window (properly sized) as a means of egress.

Comply with the applicable rules and regulations of the State Board of Education in the operation of its transportation program (in accordance with the MS Code 37-41-53; State Board of Education Policies 7903, 7904, and 7909; and Accreditation Standard #35).

- Inspect all buses on a quarterly basis and ensure that they are well maintained and clean.
- Require that all bus drivers have a valid bus driver certificate and a commercial driver's license and operates the bus according to all specified safety

procedures. Maintain a record of yearly motor vehicle reports on each bus driver and evidence that each driver has received two hours of in-service training per semester. (SB Policy 7903)

- Ensure arrival of all buses at their designated school sites prior to the start of the instructional day.

Provide facilities that meet the criteria of: (MS Code 37-7-301 (c) (d) (j); 37-11-5, 49 and 45-11-101; and Accreditation Standard #36).

- Provide facilities that are clean.
- Provide facilities that are safe.
- Provide proper signage that explains tobacco, weapons, and drugs are prohibited on the school campus and at school functions.
- Provide operational facilities that are equipped and functional to meet the instructional needs of students and staff (in accordance with the Mississippi School Design Guidelines at www.edi.msstate.edu).
- Provide air conditioning in all classrooms, Code §37-17-6(2) (2000).

Comply with the requirements for Safe and Healthy Schools:

- Maintain a comprehensive School Safety Plan on file that has been approved annually by the local school board. (MS Code 37-3-81 and 37-3-82(2); and Accreditation Standard #37.1); see the School Safety Manual and the MDE School Occupational Safety and Crisis Response Plan at: http://www.healthyschoolsms.org/healthy_school_environment/school_safety.htm.
- State Board Policy EBB (1990) prohibits the possession of pistols, firearms or weapons by any person on school premises or at school functions. Code §37-11-18 (1996) requires any student who possesses a knife, a handgun, other firearm or any other instrument considered to be dangerous and capable of causing bodily harm or who commit a violent act on educational property be subject to automatic expulsion for one calendar year. The superintendent of the school is authorized to modify the period of time for expulsion on a case-by-case basis.
- Prohibits students from possessing tobacco on any educational property, Criminal Code §97-32-9 (2000). Code §97-32-29 (2000) further prohibits the use of tobacco on any educational property for adults who, if in violation, would be subject to a fine and issued a citation by a law enforcement officer. Educational property is defined as any public school building or bus, campus, grounds, athletic field, or other property used or operated during a school-related activity.

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Conduct self assessments of the school building(s) annually prior to school opening.
- Conduct self assessments of the school(s) bus transportation system annually prior to school opening.
- Conduct self assessments of the school(s) safety and security annually prior to school opening.
- Install locks on classroom doors in order to create security from the inside.
- Complete a yearly comprehensive health and safety assessment of the school building and

grounds and report to the superintendent and school board.

- Eliminate unnecessary school bus idling that causes pollution and creates health risk for children such as; asthma, allergies, and other respiratory problems (www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus).
- Install security cameras on the school campus.
- Utilize regularly scheduled meetings with the School Health Council, school board members, etc. to determine and discuss the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges associated with implementing and maintaining your school's healthy and safe environment.
- Utilize best practices for the use of pesticides and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in school buildings and on school grounds.

Commitment to Quality Health Services

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Ensure all school nurses are working under the guidelines of the *Mississippi School Nurse Procedures and Standards of Care*.
- Offer comprehensive health services for students in grades K-12, through the employment of school nurses, as a means to academic success.
- Optimize the provision of health services with a school nurse-to-student ratio of 1:750 for students in the general population.
- Collaborate with other school staff to provide health services as part of a Coordinated School Health Program.
- Work with students, parents, and local health care providers to effectively manage and treat chronic diseases.
- Promote healthy lifestyles through school and community events (PTA meetings, open houses, health fairs, teacher in-services, and other events).
- Participate in administrative claiming for reimbursement of administrative cost associated with health and medical outreach.

Commitment to Providing Counseling, Psychological and Social Services

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Adhere to the details outlined in the Li censure Guidelines (451) when hiring guidance counselors and psychologists. The state does not have a policy specifically outlining the requirements for a school social worker. For licensure as a social worker in the state of Mississippi, a candidate must: provide verification of a baccalaureate degree in social work from a college or university accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) or Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and scores a minimum of 70 on the ASWB basic exam.
- Provide at a minimum, a ½ time licensed guidance counselor for high school and ensure that all elementary school students have access to qualified student support personnel such as: guidance counselors, social workers, nurses, psychologists, psychometrists, and others (as required by the Mississippi Public School

Accountability Standards, Process Standards 6.1 and 6.2).

- Hire school counselors who agree to abide by the American School Counselor Association Code of Ethics.
- Ensure that all school guidance counselors provide comprehensive counseling services.
- Offer quality counseling, psychological and social services provided by professionals such as certified school counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
- Provide additional services to improve students' mental, emotional, and social health.
- Offer counseling, group assessments, interventions and other mental health services, as well as referrals to community health professionals.
- Hire qualified counselors who will address the mental health, academic, and career needs of students in the school setting.

Commitment to Family and Community Involvement

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

Give parents and community the opportunity to serve on the School Health Council (SHC).

- Recruit, train, and involve families as volunteers by taking advantage of their time, experience, and resources.
- Invite family volunteers to lead physical activities for children, such as walkathons, after-school programs, cheer leading, etc.
- Communicate with families about health education classes and courses and opportunities to participate in school health programs and other community-based programs.
- Encourage family mealtimes at home to enhance both nutrient intake of children and their successful performance at school.
- Invite family members to a school meal.

Commitment to Implementing a Quality Staff Wellness Program

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- Promote health and reduce risk factors through professional and staff development programs, providing information flyers and newsletters, introducing incentives for participating in healthy practices and activities, and offering an employee assistance program.
- Develop relationships with community health providers (e.g., local health departments, hospitals, neighborhood clinics, health professionals), recreational facilities, voluntary health organizations (e.g., American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, American Heart Association), and other community members who can provide resources for or support school employee wellness activities.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Mississippi State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan that has been enhanced to include *Motivating Mississippi: Keys to Living Healthy*, a new wellness and health promotion program designed to help individuals live a healthy lifestyle and increase their overall wellness benefit amount.
- Remove carbonated drinks from vending machines located in teacher's lounges, and

offer water, low-fat milk, and 100 percent juice to staff members.

Commitment to Implementation

The Hazlehurst City School District will:

- **Establish a plan for implementation of the school wellness policy.**
- **Designate one or more persons to insure that the school wellness policy is implemented as written.**
- **Establish and support a School Health Council (SHC) that addresses all aspects of a coordinated school health program, including a school wellness policy (Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated, Section 37-13-134).**
- **Conduct a review of the progress toward school wellness policy goals each year to identify areas for improvement.**
- **Prepare and submit a yearly report to the school board regarding the progress toward implementation of the school wellness policy and recommendations for any revisions to the policy as necessary.**

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