

A Publication for Child Nutrition Professionals from the National Food Service Management Institute

A New Resource From NFSMI Created for Sustaining and Strengthening Local Wellness Objectives and Activities

Local Wellness Policies (LWPs) are required under the Child Nutrition and Reauthorization Act of 2004 to improve student health and to provide more healthful environments on school campuses. Responsibility for developing, implementing and monitoring the LWP F initiatives is at the local level in order to address the individual school districts' needs. Though R this flexibility is intended to aid professionals in implementing personalized programs that fit their district's unique needs, developing, implementing, and sustaining these programs can be a challenge if no templates or resources are available.

> The Team Nutrition Local Wellness Policy Demonstration Project documented the development and early implementation phases of LWPs. The National Food Service

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Management Institute, Applied **Research Division** (NFSMI, ARD) followed up with two studies. The first was a descriptive case study of school nutrition (SN) directors at four districts to explore LWP sustainability strategies for middle schools. In the second study, researchers surveyed a national sample of SN directors and other school administrators to collect information on school district practices designed to sustain LWP initiatives. Respondents to the survey identified a need for the

following training and resources needed to effectively sustain LWP initiatives:

- Strategies to monitor and evaluate the LWP activities;
- Checklists to monitor progress or observe activities related to the LWP;
- Professional development/training module on LWP monitoring and evaluation; and
- Strategies for reporting results to the school board, media, community.

The purpose of this project was to develop a resource to help school districts evaluate their own wellness initiatives. The objective was to create a free, easyto-use, Web-based resource for SN professionals that would focus on communication, leadership, and monitoring/evaluation activities that lead to successful sustainability and strengthening of wellness initiatives.



Effective evaluation is an important tool for improving school environments to achieve student wellness.

- Effective evaluation measures improvement in small changes.
- The process of evaluation is integrated into management and curriculum, and the process is continuous and sustainable.

METHOD

Phase I

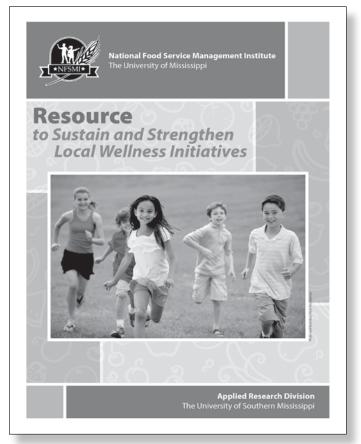
- An expert panel was assembled to establish consensus for a set of statements related to sustainability of LWPs.
- This panel consisted of SN professionals, school personnel, and federal/university researchers with experience in evaluating SN and LWP programs.
- The panel also identified and confirmed potential characteristics for a resource to help school districts monitor and evaluate components of their LWPs.

Phase II

- In the second phase, a convenience sample of 100 SN professionals was created, and included at least one professional from each state.
- Review panel members used an online survey to evaluate the expert panel draft consensus statements and the characteristics of a successful resource. The Phase II review panel largely agreed with the expert panel consensus statements and the characteristics of a successful resource.
- The following is a list of descriptors that both panels agreed were important qualities of a training resource: user-friendly, not labor- or time-intensive, simple-to-use tools, reliable, available online, includes training components, components can be self-delivered, credible and evidence-based, and free for users.

The consensus statements were used to develop both the content and format of the resource to assist school districts and school sites in evaluating objectives and activities in their LWPs. The researchers developed the framework for the resource based largely on the characteristics of a successful resource developed by the expert panel and confirmed by the national panel.

FINDINGS



- The *Resource to Sustain and Strengthen Local Wellness Initiatives,* is a user-friendly workbook designed to engage the district- and school-level monitors/ evaluators in the development of an effective evaluation program through a structured step-bystep format.
- The resource is a free PDF document, available for download on the NFSMI Web site: www.nfsmi.org/ documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20130228111227.pdf.
- The content of the resource describes the evaluation process as a series of eight action steps. Each step includes background information, tips, best practices, and space to develop an action plan. These steps, listed below, are explained in broad detail in the resource:
 - Step 1: Select an objective or activity to evaluate.
 - Step 2: Select your measurement type.
 - Step 3: Determine what you will measure.
 - Step 4: Select a data collection tool.
 - Step 5: Collect your data.
 - Step 6: Analyze the collected data.
 - Step 7: Determine what your results mean.
 - Step 8: Communicate your results.

- An example evaluation of an objective is followed from selection (Step 1) to communicate your results (Step 8).
- The resource also includes a glossary and a section on Evaluation Aids and Examples. The Evaluation Aids *and Examples* section includes the following:
 - List of Potential Factors to Measure
 - Example of a Checklist: What Do You Do for Exercise?
 - Example of an Observation Form: Observation of Track Walking Before or After School
 - Example of a Survey: My Track Walking Time
 - Example of a Participation Log: Sign-in Please!
 - Evaluation Math
 - **Example of Presentation Slides**
 - Resources on Evaluating Local Wellness Policies
- The components of the workbook were designed to lead up to the action plan, which describes what the monitors/evaluators are prepared to do. The workbook learning environment supports each learning stage, and the progress toward developing an evaluation plan is documented in the workbook.

STEP 2

Select your measurement type

You can measure your activity several ways. The way that you measure your activity determines the type of information that you get.

Process measures tell you about resources th you are using. These are important later when you show how you have used your current resources or communicate needs for additional resources.

Outcome measures tell you what happens when you implement an activity. If this is a new activity that you are trying out, you will have an outcome measure; this measure will give you an idea of whether the activity is likely to be successful for your school site or district.

If you have an activity that is ready to be fully implemented, you will want to make an impac imeasure; this measure will tell you how much of your population you have reached and/or how close you are to your goal/objective.

Outcome measures and impact measures are similar. The difference is looking at the total at the activity of only those who participate (outcome). Activity to evaluate: Before- and after-school walk around the track Potential process measures:

Example

- · Resources used for implementation of the activity
 Facility use: total time and number of times in a week that the track was made available before and after school
- Potential outcome measures · Number of students who are able to

ParticipateMinutes of walking time for students Potential impact measures:

- Number of students who participate compared to the number of potential Number of students who walk an average of 15 minutes/day compared to the number of potential participants

DEFINITIONS

Impact measure: Measurement that reflects the extent of change in the total student/staff/ community population: examples include the total level of participation by students/staff/ community, the percentage reached of a target measure, etc.

Outcome measure: Measurement that evaluates a result of an activity; examples include number of miles walked by a student or faculty member, change in endurance, number of whole grain servings selected from a line, etc.

Process measure: Measurement that evaluates resources that are available to use; examples include personnel time, facility use, class sessions, supplies, etc



PRACTICAL USE OF THIS INFORMATION

- The resource may be used both as a training aid and as a structured guide to developing an initial evaluation action plan for a school district.
- The format of the resource allows users to progress through the evaluation process, conducting evaluations that are focused on the local policy needs and communicating the results of the evaluations to a range of stakeholders.
- Use of the resource allows for sharing and review of planned activities and focuses on continuous improvement of an LWP.
- Having this Web-based resource available as a workbook guide for initial evaluation of LWP objectives and activities will, hopefully, encourage more districts and school sites to begin their monitoring and evaluation activities.
- The workbook itself can be used as an individual or group training tool, as a planner for wellness committees and other groups to develop their evaluation plans, and as a record of progress for successive individuals/groups who continue the initial evaluation efforts.

For More Information

- The Child Nutrition and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004, Public Law 108-265, Section 204.
- Osowski, J. M. & Nettles, M. F. (2012). Sustainability of School Wellness Policy Initiatives [Abstract]. *The Journal* of Child Nutrition & Management, 36(2). Abstract retrieved from http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Content. aspx?id=18050
- Osowski, J. M. & Nettles, M. F. (2013). *Exploring the Role of the School Nutrition Program in the Sustainability of School Wellness Policy Initiatives in the Middle School Setting*. University, MS: National Food Service Management Institute.
- Wood, Y., Cody, M. M., Nettles, M. F. (2010). Team Nutrition Local Wellness Demonstration Project Report (Technical Report No. R-157-10). University, MS: National Food Service Management Institute.



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