



2026

# STUDENT WELLNESS POLICY



DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

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### PREAMBLE

The Diocese of Springfield in Illinois (hereto referred to as the Diocese) is committed to the optimal physical and academic development of every student. For students to achieve personal, academic, developmental and social success, we must create positive, safe and health-promoting learning environments at every level, in every setting, throughout the school year. The Diocese will align health and wellness efforts with other school improvement endeavors to ensure the optimal health and academic success of all students.

Research shows that proper nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day are strongly correlated with positive academic outcomes. For example, student participation in the School Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism and better performance on cognitive tasks. Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables and dairy products is associated with lower grades. Participation in active transportation to and from school (e.g., walking and bicycling), recess, physical activity breaks, physical education and extracurricular activities involving physical activity results in better academic outcomes for students. Finally, there is evidence that adequate hydration is associated with better cognitive performance.

This wellness policy outlines the Diocese's approach to ensuring that the school environment provides opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day. **This policy applies to all schools in the Diocese participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program.** Specific measurable goals and outcomes are identified within each section.

In order to be compliant with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) final rule of 2016 (final rule), the policy must at minimum:

- identify one or more school official(s) who have the authority and responsibility for ensuring that the school complies with the plan
- include language inviting caregivers, students, representatives of the school food authority\* (SFA), teachers of physical education (PE), school health professionals, the school board, school administrators and the general public to participate in the development, implementation, review and update of the plan
- include language describing the methods for informing the public (including caregivers, students and others in the community) about the plan and any updates to the policy on an annual basis
- include language requiring that at least once every three years, the following is measured and made available to the public:
  - the extent to which schools comply with the plan
  - the extent to which the plan compares to model local school wellness policies
  - the progress made in attaining the goals of the plan
- include nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold on the school campus\* during the school day\* that are consistent with federal regulations for school meals and the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards\* (Smart Snacks standards)
- include standards for all foods and beverages offered\*, but not sold, to students during the school day (e.g., for classroom parties or classroom snacks brought by caregivers),
- include specific goals for nutrition education\* and nutrition promotion\* activities
- include requirements for marketing and advertising on the school campus during the school day of only those foods and beverages that meet Smart Snacks standards

- include specific goals for physical activity opportunities
- include specific goals for other school-based activities that promote student wellness

*Each required school in the Diocese will coordinate the wellness policy with other aspects of school management, including the School Improvement Plan, when appropriate.*

## **I. School Wellness Committee**

### ***Committee Purpose and Membership***

Each school in the Diocese will convene a representative local wellness committee that meets at least four times per year to establish goals for and oversee school health and safety policies and programs, including the development, implementation and periodic review and update of this local-level wellness policy.

Committee membership will represent all school levels and include, but not be limited to: parents and caregivers; students; representatives of the school nutrition program; physical education teachers; health education teachers; health professionals (nurses, physicians, dietitians, dentists, health educators, and other allied health personnel who provide school health services), and mental health and social services staff (school counselors, psychologists, social workers, or psychiatrists); school administrators (superintendent, principal, vice principal), school board members. To the extent possible, the committee should include representatives who reflect the diversity of the school community.

### ***Leadership***

The principal or designee(s) at each school within the Diocese will convene the committee, facilitate development of and updates to the wellness policy, and ensure their school's compliance with the policy. The names and contact information (email address is sufficient) of the principal (or designee) and the committee members will be made readily available to school families and constituents.

Each school will designate a school wellness policy coordinator, likely the building principal, who will ensure compliance with the policy.

## **II. Accountability**

### ***Triennial Assessments***

At least once every three years, the school will assess the local-level wellness plan by measuring:

- the extent to which the wellness plan meets the requirements of the final rule
- the extent to which schools under the jurisdiction of the diocese are complying with the plan
- the progress made in attaining the goals of the wellness plan

### ***Documentation***

Schools will retain records to document the presence of and compliance with the wellness policy at the local level. Documentation maintained in each school will include but will not be limited to:

- the current and previous local-level wellness plan
- documentation demonstrating that the wellness plan has been made available to the school families and school constituents
- documentation of the most recent school-level assessments of implementation
- documentation of efforts to review and update the wellness plan, including who was involved, and how the school made stakeholders aware of their ability to participate

### ***Policy Updates***

The school wellness committee will update the local-level wellness plan based upon the results of the triennial assessment, diocese and school priorities, community needs, the results of school health assessments, school-level implementation progress, emerging scientific information, and new federal or state regulations or guidance.

### ***Notification to School Families and School Constituents***

The school will actively inform school families and school constituents each year of basic information about the local-level wellness plan, including but not limited to:

- its content and any updates
- school-level implementation status
- an explanation of why updates were made, who was involved and how stakeholders were made aware of their ability to participate
- the effective dates of any policy changes
- the names and contact information of the school officials leading and coordinating the wellness committee
- information on how school families and school constituents can get involved with the wellness committee
- information about wellness committee meetings including dates, times, locations, agendas and meeting minutes
- mechanisms for school families and constituents to provide feedback and comments

The school will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community and will use communication methods that are appropriate to ensure that all caregivers have access to the information. The school will keep persons with disabilities or those that represent the interests of those with disabilities involved in all aspects including wellness plan updates and assessments. The school will use multiple methods to distribute this information to the school community, including but not limited to:

- electronic mechanisms (e.g., email)
- displaying notices on the school website

- non-electronic mechanisms (e.g., newsletters)
- presentations to caregivers
- sending information home to caregivers

The school is committed to ensuring that the school community is aware of and involved in the development and implementation of the local-level wellness plan. The school will actively communicate the ways in which representatives of the school wellness committee and others can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the wellness plan.

### **III. Nutrition Services**

#### ***School Meals***

Children consume as many as half of their daily calories at school. Schools play an important role in offering meals with vital nutrients while shaping students' eating habits. Students who participate in the school meal programs have access to nutritious foods and beverages to support their growth, development and academic performance.

The USDA Child Nutrition Programs\* (child nutrition programs) aim to improve the health of students, help mitigate hunger and obesity and model healthy eating by providing meals that are low in fat and sodium, and abundant in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. These programs support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

Schools within the Diocese that participate in food service through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) will provide meals that meet the nutrition standards for school meals by including:

- fruits and vegetables, including a variety of fruits and vegetables that meet the required vegetable subgroups (dark green, red and orange, dry beans, and peas and legumes)
- grains (whole grain-rich)
- meats and meat alternates
- fat-free and low-fat milk
- access to free drinking water

In addition:

- school meals will be accessible to all students
- school meals will be administered by a team of qualified nutrition professionals who meet or exceed the hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements of the USDA Professional Standards for Child Nutrition Professionals
- the school will make every effort to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that the method of payment does not identify a student as eligible for free or reduced-price meals (e.g., using prepayment systems which mask students' eligibility status)

#### ***Water***

Access to safe, free drinking water helps to increase students' overall water consumption, maintain

hydration and reduce energy intake when substituted for sugar-sweetened beverages. In addition, adequate hydration may improve cognitive function among children and adolescents, which is important for learning. Free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students during mealtimes where school meals are served.

### ***Competitive Foods and Beverages***

Competitive foods and beverages include those items sold as à la carte and in vending machines, school stores and snack or food carts, as well as any food-based fundraising meant for consumption during the school day. These foods are called competitive foods because students may choose to eat them instead of healthier foods offered through the school meal programs.

The school will ensure that all foods and beverages sold to students on the school campus during the school day support healthy eating, including those provided outside of the school meal programs. All foods and beverages sold outside of the school meal programs, during the school day will, at a minimum, meet Smart Snacks. These standards will apply in all locations and through all services where foods and beverages are sold, which may include but are not limited to à la carte, vending machines, school stores and snack or food carts, as well as any food-based fundraising meant for consumption during the school day.

To qualify as a Smart Snack, a snack or entrée must:

- be a grain product that contains 50% or more whole grains by weight (have a whole grain as the first ingredient), or
- have as the first ingredient a fruit, vegetable, dairy product or protein food, or
- be a combination food that contains at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of fruit and/or vegetable, and
- meet the following minimum standards for calories, sodium, sugar and fats:

| <b>Nutrient</b> | <b>Snack</b>              | <b>Entree</b>             |
|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Calories        | 200 calories or less      | 350 calories or less      |
| Sodium          | 200 mg or less            | 480 mg or less            |
| Total Fat       | 35% of calories or less   | 35% of calories or less   |
| Saturated Fat   | Less than 10% of calories | Less than 10% of calories |
| Trans Fat       | 0g                        | 0g                        |
| Sugar           | 35% by weight or less     | 35% by weight or less     |

### ***Celebrations and Rewards***

Celebrations and positive reinforcement are an important part of our school's culture of supporting students. Using food as a reward or withholding food as a punishment undermines healthy eating habits and interferes with children's ability to self-regulate their eating.

The school will ensure that celebrations and rewards are consistent with the nutrition policies. This includes foods and beverages offered during celebrations and parties, for classroom snacks and as rewards and incentives. The school recommends utilizing rewards that promote physical activity and/or promote

educational messages (e.g., a coupon for a free book at the book fair for consistently returning books to the library on time). Foods and beverages will not be withheld as a punishment for any reason.

### ***Fundraising***

Fundraising efforts provide opportunities for student, staff, family and community collaboration and reflect the healthy eating practices and policies in the school. The school will allow only foods and beverages that meet or exceed Smart Snacks standards to be sold through fundraisers on the school campus during the school day unless state exemptions apply.

### ***Nutrition Education***

Nutrition education is a vital part of a comprehensive health education program and empowers children with knowledge and skills to make healthy food and beverage choices. The school will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating among students. Schools will provide nutrition education integrated into other subjects, as part of health education and/or offer stand-alone classes at each grade level.

### ***Nutrition Promotion***

Nutrition promotion using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages helps to create healthy food environments and positively influences lifelong healthy eating behaviors. It also helps to encourage and increase participation in school meal programs.

The school will ensure that students and staff receive consistent nutrition messages throughout the school campus including in classrooms, gymnasiums and cafeterias. The school will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students across the school campus during the school day and will encourage participation in school meal programs.

### ***Food and Beverage Marketing***

Health and wellness efforts are weakened when students are subjected to advertising on district property that promotes unhealthy foods and beverages. The school is committed to teaching students to make informed choices about nutrition, health and physical activity and to providing a school environment that ensures opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

All foods and beverages marketed or promoted to students on the school campus during the school day and during the extended school day (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school) will meet or exceed Smart Snacks.

This includes the marketing of products on:

- the exterior of vending machines
- posters, flyers, menu boards, coolers, trash cans and other food service equipment
- cups used for beverage dispensing

As the school administrator reviews existing contracts and considers new contracts, equipment and product purchasing (and replacement) decisions should reflect the applicable marketing guidelines established by this wellness policy.

#### **IV. Physical Activity Opportunities**

Children and adolescents, including children with disabilities, should participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day in order to ensure optimum health. The school requires that a combination of physical activity opportunities from, but not limited to, the list below be offered to students:

- physical education
- classroom physical activity
- active academics
- daily recess
- before- and after-school activities, including sports
- support for and promotion of active transportation

#### **V. Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness**

Schools are integral in promoting healthy behaviors, and the school building provides numerous opportunities to educate students about healthy habits. The school will integrate wellness activities across the entire school setting, including the cafeteria, other food and beverage venues, classrooms and physical activity facilities.