



SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICIES

Opportunity Knocks for HOSA

*by SeAnne Safaii, PhD, RD
Idaho State HOSA Advisor*



Schools play a critical role in promoting student health, preventing childhood obesity, and combating problems associated with poor nutrition and physical inactivity. To formalize and encourage this role, Congress passed a law (P.L. 108 - 265) requiring all local educational agencies who receive funding for Child Nutrition Programs to establish a local school wellness policy by School Year 2006. A school wellness policy is a written document which outlines the rationale, goals and standards, that a school or district plans to implement for the wellness of its students and staff.

in the past 20 years, the incidence of overweight has doubled and even tripled among adolescents

75% of children get less than 20 minutes of vigorous activity every day

This legislation supports President George W. Bush's HealthierUS initiative which encourages Americans to take steps to improve personal health and fitness and encourages all Americans, including children, to be physically active every day; eat a nutritious diet; get preventive screening; and make healthy choices.

The legislation also places the responsibility of developing a wellness policy at the local level, so that the individual needs of each district can be addressed. According to the requirements for the Local Wellness Policy, school districts must set goals for nutrition education, physical activity, campus food provision, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness. Additionally, districts are encouraged to develop "Health Councils" representing a broad group of individuals (students, teachers, administrators and parents) in policy development and to have a plan for measuring policy implementation. This is an opportunity for HOSA. At least one member of HOSA should sit on a school's Health Council. They are the voice for students and have the health background to make large contributions to the school wellness policy.

more than 9 million children between the ages of 6 and 19 are considered overweight

HOSA members can not only play an active role in developing the wellness policy, but can promote the policy by modeling healthful behaviors, providing education and serving as mentors to other students, especially those in middle and elementary schools. For more information about School Wellness Policies visit <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/>.

