Obesity Facts
Snacks in Alaska Schools

WHAT ARE SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICIES?

School Wellness Policies are school-based physical activity and nutrition policies created to help children grow up at a healthy weight.

School Wellness Policies are required for all districts participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs.

In 2014, the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards expanded to ensure “competitive foods”—snacks and beverages sold in vending machines, school stores, snack carts, à la carte lines and fundraising during the school day—are nutritious and promote health.

WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT AVAILABILITY OF SNACKS IN ALASKA SCHOOLS?

School environments that promote consumption of less nutritious foods and beverages are associated with the following:

- Poorer student diets and
- Higher student weights.
- About 1 in 3 Alaska high school students is overweight or obese.
- Obese youth are at increased risk of prediabetes.
- Excess weight or obesity in children is related to poor health outcomes during childhood, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- Obese children are more likely to become obese adults, who are more at risk for adult health problems, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and early death.
- In addition to suffering from physical health problems, obese children may also experience social stigmatization, discrimination and psychological problems.

REFERENCES

We are making progress in Alaska’s school nutrition environment, but we still need your help to make our schools healthier!

Children spend most of their day at school. So, it’s important that they have healthy foods and drinks while they are there. Good nutrition and physical activity also help kids learn better. A school wellness policy tells how your school is making the healthy choice, the easy choice for kids. Parents and community members can help update the school wellness policy and to put it into action.

4 ways you can help:

1. Join your school wellness committee. Each school district should have a wellness team to make nutrition and physical activity goals. Districts must allow parents and community members to participate. You do not need any special training to be on the committee, just an interest in keeping your school healthy!


3. Support classroom and school events to have healthy foods and get kids physically active. Keep the wellness policy in mind when planning what foods and beverages to have at events and celebrations.

4. Support healthy fundraising. Use the Smart Snacks Product Calculator to ensure that foods and beverages sold in schools meet Smart Snacks standards at [www.healthiergeneration.org/productcalculator](http://www.healthiergeneration.org/productcalculator).

What is in your school wellness policy?

All districts participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs are required to have a local wellness policy. Major topics in the policy are:

- Nutrition education and promotion
- Physical activity and Physical Education
- Other wellness activities (such as school gardens and walk/bike to school)
- Nutrition standards for all foods and drinks sold at school (aka Smart Snacks)
- Foods and drinks that may be given to students (such as at classroom celebrations or rewards for behavior)
- Food and beverage marketing

We look forward to working with you to ensure our schools continue to be healthy places that support growth and learning. For more information, contact Lauren Kelsey at: lauren.kelsey@alaska.gov

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