

Guide to Communicating Your District Wellness Policy

Crafting and/or updating your District Wellness Policy is a giant step forward, but it is only the beginning. In order to implement a policy, everyone involved must be aware of its existence, know where to access it, and understand what's included in it. Be sure to take advantage of *every* communication method available to your school community to build awareness of the District Wellness Policy.

**Communicate
Well and Often**

Communicating in a **POSITIVE** way is important and can influence the way your message is received. Concentrate more on the benefits of a healthy school and offer positive alternatives and creative ideas as opposed to simply telling people what the policy prohibits. Don't forget to monitor implementation at all schools and share successes and what's working well!

Two-way dialogue is vital - let stakeholders know how to reach the wellness committee chairperson with questions, comments and challenges they are experiencing. And reach out to the RI Healthy Schools Coalition (info@rihsc.org) if you need help!

The more you engage others in the process, the more they feel invested in it.

STEP ONE: Identify stakeholders

Stakeholders are people who have an interest in the policy and its outcomes, and/or are responsible for its implementation. Be sure to identify and target all stakeholders, within and outside the school department. All stakeholders need to be informed and educated about the Wellness Policy:

- ◆ Parents
- ◆ Students
- ◆ Central office administrators
- ◆ School faculty
- ◆ School board members
- ◆ Principals
- ◆ PTO/PTA/PTG
- ◆ All school groups involved in school fundraising activities
- ◆ Food service staff
- ◆ Before/after school program personnel
- ◆ Community members

Inform ➡ **Involve** ➡ **Engage**



STEP TWO: Make your policy accessible

The full Wellness Policy should be easily accessible to everyone. Consider making a dedicated Health & Wellness page on your district website, with the full policy available, as well as other wellness resources.

- ◆ Post the full policy on your district website
- ◆ Post the full policy on individual school websites, if possible
- ◆ Keep a paper copy of the full policy for reference in the main office of each school



STEP THREE: Summarize your policy and publicize

Consider making a brochure or flyer, highlighting/summarizing the provisions of your policy that can be shared in a number of ways. You may even consider customizing flyers for each of the stakeholder audiences and share using as many of the following as possible:

- ◆ **Recruit students to help spread the word with their peers - they often have creative ideas**
- ◆ District/school websites—entire policy should be posted; ideally, the district website will have a dedicated Health & Wellness page where summary brochures/flyers are available
- ◆ District/school newsletters/newspapers
- ◆ District/school listservs
- ◆ School handbooks
- ◆ District/school social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- ◆ Parent/teacher conferences, Open Houses and other school events
- ◆ Backpacks sent home with elementary school children
- ◆ Flyers/posters hanging up around school



STEP FOUR: Review communications plan and periodically repeat

Repetition is key—the communication process is ongoing.

The current staff, student body and families need to hear the message more than once, and keep in mind that there are always new students and staff to educate.

Communicate about the content of the policy, as well as updates on its implementation, including successes and challenges.

Keep track of which communication channels are used and when. Periodically remind stakeholders of the policy, particularly at the beginning of every school year, but also throughout the year. Everyone is juggling many different priorities at once, and the Wellness Policy may not be top-of-mind, which is why it is so important to ***communicate, communicate, communicate.***