


Creating Supportive Nutrition Environments in Schools

School districts across Michigan implemented the Local School Wellness Policy and adopted policies promoting health foods. These policy changes support a health learning environment for students. For example, there was a decrease in the percent of youth that reported drinking soda at least once a day between 2013 and 2018.


Problem



School districts in Michigan have struggled with Local School Wellness Policy (LWP) implementation since the requirement was first established by the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. When the requirement was strengthened by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA), district staff, including school nutrition professionals, were vocal about their need for training and resources to help with proper implementation. The LWP requirement is specific to local educational agencies (LEA) (local school districts, public school academies, and intermediate school districts) that participate in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program. In Michigan, this translates to approximately 889 LEAs that serve 1,545,343 students, so the impact is far reaching. The main issue with LWP implementation is that it wasn't happening consistently across the state.

There was substantial variability in local wellness policies, in the strength of the policies, and in policy enforcement. Through the HHFKA, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) was directed to strengthen the requirements for local school wellness policies and put more emphasis on implementation, periodic review, and updates.

Intervention



In 2013, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services was awarded the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health funding, also known as 1305. A portion of this funding was to be utilized by MDE for school health initiatives, however, none of the money was allocated for nutrition-related activities. As a result, the School Health and Safety unit collaborated with internal partners in MDE's School Nutrition Unit (Program Analysts conducting Administrative Reviews and Team Nutrition) and external partners (e.g. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Michigan Action for Healthy Kids, Michigan School Health Coordinators Association, Michigan State University Extension, School Nutrition Association of Michigan, and United Dairy Industry of Michigan) to work toward a mutual goal of "improving LWP implementation in districts throughout the state." The first step in achieving this goal was to revise the original Michigan SBE Model LWP that was adopted in 2005. A Revision Meeting was held in August 2014, with over 50 attendees from varying organizations. Input was gathered from all stakeholders. The policy revision began immediately following USDA's announcement of the LWP final rule on July 29, 2016. The updated model policy was adopted by the SBE on April 19, 2017 and disseminated to all 900 LEAs in Michigan on May 4, 2017.

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Intervention (continued)

In addition to the model policy revision, a number of conference calls, in-person and online trainings, presentations at conferences, and webinars were conducted (and continue to be) to ensure compliance with LWP requirements. Support and technical assistance is also offered by Program Analysts (those that conduct Administrative Reviews) in the School Nutrition Programs unit at MDE.

Health Impact

MDE began providing the LWP support to LEAs shortly after USDA released the Proposed Rule: Local School Wellness Policy Implementation Under the HHFKA of 2010, on February 26, 2014.

When LWP requirements are implemented with fidelity, school environments do become healthier. According to 2016 School Health Profiles data from Michigan, the percent of LEAs that adopted and implemented policies that establish standards for all competitive foods available during the school day increased from 0% (Baseline) to 54.6% (Year 5 Actual). The percent of schools that do not sell less healthy foods and beverages increased from 33% to 51.06%. The percent of LEAs that adopted and implemented policies that prohibit all forms of advertising and promotion of less nutritious food and beverages on school property increased from 0% to 50%. And, the percent of schools that offer fruits or non-fried vegetables when foods or beverages are offered at school celebrations increased from 34% to 42.5%.

School health environments also improved in the LEAs targeted by 1305 funding. In high schools, according to 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data, the percent of K-12 students who drank a can, bottle or glass of soda or pop at least one time per day decreased from 24% (Baseline) to 15.3% (Year 5 Actual). In middle schools, according to 2011 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth data, this same Performance Measure decreased from 32% to 28.18%.

MDE will continue to support LWP efforts that improve school health environments and the health of Michigan students to ensure they achieve their full academic potential.

