

Impact of Local Wellness Policies on District Level Physical Activities

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ABSTRACT

Local wellness policies (LWPs) are state required documents that outline school districts' goals for improving the physical activity of their students. In Texas, most districts use a template for developing their LWP, which has seven prespecified goals that districts may include or further expand upon to include additional goals. **PURPOSE:** Determine if physical activity components of districts' LWPs were related to practices within the district. **METHODS:** LWPs published by public school districts in Texas were collected from district websites, analyzed for content related to physical activity, and assessed to determine if the district text matched the template. Then, responses were compared to the respective districts' responses to the Texas' Student Health Policies and Practices Surveys (SHPPS) for the years 2018-2021. The SHPPS data was requested through the Texas Education Agency, and district IDs were used to match the responses to their LWP. On the SHPPS, districts self-report: whether the Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) presented policy recommendations (yes/no), whether the district implemented changes recommended by the SHAC (yes/no), the content of changes (e.g., having off-campus physical activity programs), whether the wellness policy addressed specific factors influencing physical activity (e.g., increased opportunities for students to be physically active), and if the district notified parents about their child's physical fitness assessment results (yes/no). Bivariate analysis using logistic [Odds Ratio (OR) and 95% Confidence Intervals (95% CI)] and linear regression [Unstandardized Beta (B) and 95% CI] models were used to determine relationships between goals included in LWPs and self-reported practices. **RESULTS:** Overall, 431 districts had LWPs that could be matched with their SHPPS. LWPs which had additional guidelines (reported as Other_PA_Goals) were marginally more likely to receive feedback from the district's SHAC (2019-2020 [OR: 1.183, 95% CI: (0.988, 1.416), p=.067], 2020-2021 [OR: 1.19, CI: (0.992, 1.427), p=.061]) and implement more changes recommended by their SHAC during the years of 2018-2019 [OR: 1.19, 95% CI: (0.992, 1.427), p=.061]. Districts with LWPs that included the specific goal to "make physical activity enjoyable for students and staff" were also marginally more likely to notify parents that they could request their children's physical assessment results in all three years 2018-2019 [OR: 1.447, 95% CI: (0.939, 2.229), p=.094], 2019-2020 [OR: 1.458, 95% CI: (0.967, 2.198), p=.072], 2020-2021 [OR: 1.498, 95% CI (0.976, 2.299), p=.064]. **CONCLUSION:** Districts with LWPs that further expanded on the template presented by the state or had used alternate text compared to the template, were more likely to report positive physical activity practices in their district, including having the SHAC make policy recommendations and the districts implementing changes recommended by the SHAC. These findings may suggest that SHACs play an important role in the development and implementation of a districts' LWP.