Organizing a School Wellness Committee

Sierra Kirby, MPH, RD, LD
Crystal Momii
Introduction

- University of Nevada, Reno Cooperative Extension
  - Clark County Office
- Title I Elementary Schools
  - Pick a Better Snack
  - School wellness & PSE
Background

Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act & Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act\(^1\)

- As of 2006/2007 school year, all districts required to establish a local school wellness policy
  - Required components: nutrition, physical activity, activities that promote student wellness
- Local education agencies (school districts) required to have school wellness coordinator

Nevada\(^2\)

- Requires each district to designate a wellness coordinator
  - On-site coordinator decision made by district
  - Clark County School District requires schools to have a designated school wellness coordinator
School Wellness Influence

- Fewer low nutrient, energy-dense vending options\(^1\)
- More likely to implement their wellness policy\(^1\)
- Less consumption of sugar from sugar sweetened beverages (i.e. soda, pop, energy drinks)\(^2\)
- Lower BMI\(^2\)
- Students that do not eat fruits/vegetables get worse grades\(^3\)
- Students that drink SSB get worse grades\(^3\)
School Wellness Committee

What is a School Wellness Committee?¹,²

- Action oriented advisory group focuses on health and well-being of students and staff
- School and district leaders, school staff, community partners, parents, students, foodservice...
- Develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate policies, programs, and activities
  - Provide leadership, accountability, structure, support, resources
- Assess school health environment, programs, and policies and identify ways to strengthen these to improve health
  - Develop an action plan based on assessment
- Provide advice, expertise, and feedback to administrators, district, and public (parents, students, community members)
School Wellness Committee

- Why have a School Wellness Committee?¹
  - Inform stakeholders about work you’re doing to improve health and academic success of students
  - Ensure school wellness policy being implemented
  - Form partnerships and strengthen relationships between school and community
  - Enables health priorities and activities to truly reflect the needs and interests of the school
How To

- Step 1: Build a Team
- Step 2: Start Recruiting
- Step 3: Plan a Meeting

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF-XJHpjuA4
Step 1: Build a Team

- 6-12 members
  - Representing diversity of your community
  - People with a passion for children’s health
  - Have influence in the school and community
  - Have time to commit to supporting the committee’s goals
Step 2: Start Recruiting

- Invite identified potential committee members to join the team
  - Sample Wellness Committee invitation at Alliance for a Healthier Generation

- Be prepared to recruit new members as-needed to support changing goals and priorities
Step 3: Plan a Meeting

- Common/consistent meeting time
  - Use technology if needed
- Have an agenda at every meeting
- Share responsibility, ensure members are actively engaged, assign roles
- Summarize action steps and key points, follow up after each meeting
- Minimum of 4 committee meeting per school year
Step 3: Plan a Meeting Cont.

• Start with an assessment then create an action plan\(^1\)
  • Local school wellness policy is a great place to start

• Healthy Schools Program Leader’s Guide\(^2\)
  • Six Step Process: build support, complete assessment, create action plan, access resources, take action, celebrate success

• School Wellness Committee Toolkit\(^3\)
  • Talking points
  • Tips- skeptics/difficult behavior, involving students/families
  • Sample invitation letter
  • Decision making
  • Forms- contact info, meeting checklist, sample agendas
Challenges & Tips from the Field

- Assessment & policy
- Stakeholder Buy-In & Recruitment
  - Students, parents, principals, etc.
  - Turnover
  - It’s not just about the students
  - Teachers in different grade levels
- Lack of time or coordination
  - Impromptu meetings
- Lack of money
  - Using free resources
- Administrative support
- Staying Active & Effective
Helpful Resources

- Alliance for a Healthier Generation School Wellness Committees
- USDA Team Nutrition
- Action for Healthy Kids
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- CA Local School Wellness Policy Collaborative
- Institute of Child Nutrition
- Nevada School Wellness Policy
- CCSD R-5157
- NDA: School Wellness Funding Opportunities & Resources
Thank you!

Questions?

Sierra Kirby: kirbys@unce.unr.edu
Crystal Momii: momiic@unce.unr.edu