

Step 2: Communicate with Wellness Policy Stakeholders

Creating healthy school environments means change and many Montana districts have made substantial, successful changes to support strong bodies and smart brains. Still, changes can be challenging, particularly when those people affected do not understand the reasons behind the policies. Constant communication is essential for smooth and effective LWP implementation. When the “why” of school wellness is communicated clearly, the positive results usually include:

- Resistance to changes in the school environment is lessened.
- Champions wanting to actively participate in school wellness emerge.
- Common knowledge and language about school wellness engage an entire community.

Things to Consider When Communicating about School Wellness

Consider what some stakeholders may perceive as potential losses when changes are made in the school environment. Some common concerns include:

- Will choices be impacted?
- Will sales and/or revenues be reduced?
- Will beloved traditions be affected?

When communicating about school wellness, always:

- Convey factual information on changes and benefits relative to the nutrition, physical activity and wellbeing of youth.
- Provide stakeholders with relevant and positive information, i.e., why school is the best place for addressing issues of wellness in children and teens.

Strategies for Communicating About School Wellness

USDA requires that the public (including parents, students, and others in the community) be notified and regularly updated about the content and implementation of a Local Wellness Policy. School wellness information—and invitations to provide input on LWP issues—can be provided in all the ways that schools usually inform stakeholders. Here are some easy ways to communicate your school wellness policy to the school and community:

- Issue regular, open invitations for parents and the community to attend any School Wellness Committee meeting.
- Post the minutes of School Wellness Committee meetings on the district website and share through social media channels (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- Post a School Wellness Work Plan and Progress Report on the district website.
- Write a quarterly or biannual School Wellness Article for the school newsletter and/or local newspaper.
- Provide an annual report and presentation to the School Board on the school wellness policy plan and progress made on meeting the goals.
- Utilize the communication tools from the USDA Local School Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit to reach school staff, parents and community members about the school wellness policy. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy-outreach-toolkit>. This toolkit includes customizable resources to encourage stakeholders to “*Be a School Wellness Champion.*” There are letters, PowerPoint presentations, and social media posts.

- Share information on what student clubs or groups are doing on wellness topics.

Additional ideas, resources, and sample messages for getting the word out on School Wellness are available on USDA's The School Day Just Got Healthier

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday>. This site is especially useful for both traditional and social media communications. These resources can be found at this link <https://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/school-day-just-got-healthier-media>.

Montana School Nutrition Program and Montana Team Nutrition Program staff are available to provide training and technical assistance to school districts in communicating the progress of local wellness policy requirements. [Contact OPI School Nutrition Program](#)



Source: [Montana School Wellness In Action: A Step by Step Guide to Wellness Policy Implementation](#)

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