



Parents' Guide to the Diocesan Wellness Policy Catholic Schools of Memphis

On June 30, 2004, President Bush signed the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act into law. This new law requires each school district to design and implement a local wellness policy starting with the 2006-2007 school year.

This overview will focus on the main points of the Catholic Schools' new policy, and will provide you with tips on helping your school to make healthful eating and activity options a part of your child's day.

➤ **Why is this policy needed?**

- Over the past two decades, the percentage of children who are overweight has more than doubled, increasing children's risks for such potentially life-shortening diseases as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure.
- A child who is overweight is much more likely to be obese as an adult. Helping children to choose healthful foods and increase physical activity in their early years helps to cement those habits for their later years.

➤ **Why is it important for my child?**

- Well-planned and effectively implemented school nutrition and fitness programs have been shown to enhance students' overall health, as well as their behavior and academic achievement in school.

➤ **What must the schools do?**

- Schools have a responsibility to help students learn, establish, and maintain lifelong, healthy eating and activity patterns.
- All schools in the Diocese of Memphis shall abide by the provisions of the policy, as summarized in this Parents' Guide.

➤ **What can parents do to assist the school in implementing the policy?**

- Talk to your children about what they are learning regarding nutrition and physical activity at school. Reinforce these messages by planning family activities that include physical activity and healthy food choices.
- Be a role model for your children.
- Encourage your school's parent organization to offer presentations about health and wellness.
- Talk to your school's administrators about the importance of a healthy school nutrition environment for your children.
- Offer healthy snacks for school parties and special events.
- Help find fundraisers for your school that offer healthy foods, or nonfood items.

➤ **How can I find out more about this policy?**

- Visit the Diocesan website to view the complete policy:
<http://www.cdom.org/schoolsite/schoolshome.htm>
- Contact Dr. Debbi Slawson, Diocesan Coordinator of Food Services with your questions (by e-mail at: drdebbi@midsouth.rr.com, or by phone at 373-1219).

Key elements of the Diocesan Wellness Policy:

Commitment to Nutrition

The Catholic Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program will:

- Offer a school lunch program with menus that meet the meal patterns and nutrition standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition Programs.
- Offer school breakfast and snack programs (where approved and applicable) with menus that meet the meal patterns and nutrition standards established by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition Programs.
- Encourage school staff and families to participate in school meal programs.
- Establish food safety as a key component of all school food operations and ensure that the food service permit is current for the Food Service school site.
- Follow State Board of Education policies on competitive foods and extra food sales. Provide foods and beverages in accordance with the Tennessee School Vending Law:
 - Add nutritious and appealing options (such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, trail mix, beef jerky, reduced-fat milk, reduced fat-yogurt, reduced-fat cheese, 100% juice, and water) whenever foods/beverages are sold or otherwise offered at school, including vending machines, school stores, concessions stands at sporting and academic events, parties, celebrations, social events, and other school functions.

All Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Memphis will:

- Provide adequate time for students to eat and enjoy school meals (a minimum of 15-20 minutes at breakfast and 18-25 minutes at lunch). When possible, offer a few minutes of quiet time at the start of the meal period to promote a relaxed eating environment.
- Offer nutrition education that will be integrated into other areas of the curriculum such as math, science, language arts, and/or social studies.
- Encourage students to make food choices based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, by emphasizing menu options that feature baked (rather than fried foods), whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and reduced-fat dairy products.
- Discourage the use of foods as rewards for student accomplishment and the withholding of food as punishment (e.g., restricting a child's selection of flavored milk at mealtime due to behavior problems, or requiring that a child eat certain foods).
- Encourage all school-based organizations to use services, contests, non-food items, and/or healthful foods for fundraising programs. The sale of candy as a fund-raiser is discouraged.

Commitment to Physical Activity

The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Memphis will:

- Provide physical education for all elementary and middle school students. Physical education courses will provide the environment where students learn, practice, and are assessed on developmentally appropriate motor skills, social skills, and knowledge.
- Provide a physical and social environment that encourages safe and enjoyable activity for all students, including those who are not athletically gifted.
- Discourage the use of recess/physical education as reward or punishment.
- Discourage the removal of recess/physical education time in order to complete class work.
- Where possible, schedule recess or physical education before lunch times in order to increase food consumed, decrease plate waste, and improve cafeteria behavior.

Commitment to Marketing a Healthy School Environment

The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Memphis will:

- Provide positive, motivating messages, both verbal and non-verbal, about healthy lifestyle practices throughout the school setting. All school personnel will help reinforce these positive messages.
- Promote healthful eating, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community at school events (e.g., school registration, parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, open houses, health fairs, teacher in-services, and other events).
- Encourage parents who send meals for their children to provide nutritious options for their children.
- Eliminate advertising and other materials on the school campus that promote foods of minimal nutrition value.