Abstract

Schools are uniquely suited for obesity prevention interventions. In recognition of this opportunity, each school participating in federal nutrition programs is required by federal law to enact a local school wellness policy.

This study assessed the strength and comprehensiveness of 143 school wellness policies in a stratified, random sample of Minnesota public school districts, examining also relationships between school policy quality and district-level demographic variables. Overall, policies scored low in strength and moderate in comprehensiveness. Scores relating to policy evaluation were the strongest and scores relating to USDA school meal program standards were the most comprehensive, while scores relating to physical education/activity were the weakest and least comprehensive. Higher percentages of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals in school districts predicted higher school wellness strength and comprehensiveness scores. No significant relationships were found between policy total strength and comprehensiveness scores and geographic locale, minority enrollment, or total student enrollment.