

School Wellness Policies and Special Diets for Louisiana Students

January 14, 2026



Good morning. At this time we will discuss special diets for Louisiana students and the role the school RN plays in meeting the requirements for a modified meal plan at school.

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of School Wellness Policies and identify key components that promote nutrition, physical activity, and overall student well-being.
- Describe the role of the School Health Advisory Council and articulate how SHAC recommendations influence district health programs and policies.
- Discuss Special Diet Prescriptions.
- Discuss Individual Health Plans, 504 or Individual Accommodation Plans.
- Discuss Individual Education Plans.



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In the following, we will discuss these objectives so as to have a better understanding what are the requirements for schools that participate in USDA reimbursement for school meals. We will define the school wellness policies and its origin in the schools districts. Then we will discuss School Health Advisory Councils and the district's responsibilities for maintaining these councils, define the steps needed for students with special diet prescriptions which can include an IEP or IAP.

School Wellness Policies

What you need to know



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School wellness policies, what you need to know.

Local School Wellness Policies (Federal)

Local educational agencies (school systems) participating in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Programs must establish a local school wellness policy. This written plan must promote student wellness, prevent childhood obesity, and ensure school meals and other campus foods/beverages during the school day meet applicable minimum Federal standards.

[Code of Federal Regulations 7CFR210.31](#)



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The Federal government supports school nutrition programs through the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Programs. A requirement for participation in this program is for school districts to establish a local school wellness policy. The wellness policy must promote student wellness, prevent childhood obesity and ensure school meals and foods and beverages sold during the school day meet the minimum federal standards. An example of this is the contents sold in school vending machines. They must meet these minimum requirements. Louisiana uses the resource of Pennington Smart Snack list to help with making decisions on what can be sold that meet these requirements.

Content of the School Wellness Policy

Specific goals are required for:

- Nutrition promotion and education.
- Physical activity.
- Other school-based activities promoting student wellness.

Goals must use evidence-based strategies.

Standards for all foods and beverages provided (not sold) to students during the school day on each participating school campus.

Standards and nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages sold to students during the school day on each participating school campus.



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The school wellness policy federal requirements encourage for school systems to include required specific goals of nutrition promotion and education, physical activity and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. The goals must be evidence based strategies. Standards should be developed for all foods and beverages provided to students during the school day (outside foods brought in) and nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages sold to the students during the school day.

Content of the Policy Continued

Identification of the school system or school official(s) responsible for implementing and overseeing the local school wellness policy to ensure compliance.

A description of how parents, students, school food authority representatives, physical education teachers, school health professionals, the school board, school administrators, and the general public are given an opportunity to participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the policy.

A plan description for measuring policy implementation and for reporting policy content and implementation issues to the public.



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The school system or school official responsible for implementing and overseeing the local school wellness policy should be identified. Much of you are probably that designated employee due to the compliance of this policy being attached to your school lunch program's federal funding. Also those who should be included are the parents, students, school food authority representatives, PE teachers, school health professionals, members of the school board, school administrators, and the general public can participate in the development, implementation, and review of the school wellness policy. A plan description for measuring policy implementation for reporting policy content and implementation issues to the public

Public Involvement and Public Notification

Allow parents, students, school food authority representatives, physical education teachers, school health professionals, the school board, school administrators, and the general public to participate in developing, implementing, and periodically reviewing and updating the local school wellness policy;

Annually inform the public about the content and implementation of the local school wellness policy, making the policy and updates available;

Inform the public about progress toward meeting goals and compliance by making the required triennial assessment available in an accessible and easily understood manner.



When involving the public, school systems should consider the allowing these listed members to the group of people to make up the School Health Advisory Councils. Designate how often the public will be informed about the content and implementation of the local school wellness policy and any updates made to the policy. Also inform the public about progress toward meeting goals and compliance by making the required triennial assessments available in an easily understandable manner.

Implementation Assessments and Updates

Designate officials to ensure each school complies with the local school wellness policy.

At school systems every three years, assess and publicize school compliance. The assessment must measure implementation and include:

- Schools' compliance level with the policy;
- How the policy compares to model policies; and
- Progress toward attaining the policy's goals.

Update or modify the policy as needed, based on the triennial assessment.



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For implementation, assessment, and updating of the policy process should include designated school officials to oversee this is carried out. school systems should at school systemst every three years assess and publicize school compliance and include school compliance levels with the policy, how the policy compares to model policies and progress toward attaining the goals outlined.

Record Keeping Requirements

Local educational agencies must maintain records to document compliance with this section's requirements. These records include:

- The written local school wellness policy;
- Documentation of compliance with community involvement requirements, including making the policy and triennial assessments publicly available as required in paragraph (e); and
- Documentation of the triennial assessment for each school's local school wellness policy.



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Documentation should be maintained as proof of compliance and should include the written local school wellness policy, documentation of compliance with community involvement including making the policy and triennial assessment available to the public, and documentation of the triennial assessment for each school's wellness policy.

BESE Requirements

Bulletin 741



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Next we will also look at the BESE policy Bulletin 741 that includes SHAC that helps to meet the federal standards and it's origins within state law.

School Health Advisory Councils (SHAC)

2013 Update (R.S. 17:17.1): School Health Advisory Councils (SHAC) in all school districts.

- SHAC advises the school board on: student physical activity, health education, nutrition, and overall student health.
- Specific advisory roles include compliance with vending machine restrictions, use of physical fitness assessment results, and school recess policies.
- Council members are appointed by the school board and must include parents and community representatives.

February 2025 BESE Action: SHAC language was also added to Bulletin 741.



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In our state, the legislatures passed R.S. 17:17.1 which mandated school health advisory councils to be formed in all school districts to help with the obesity problem of within our state. In this law, much of what we covered in the federal guidelines is outlined in the state law. In February of 2025, in order to help with compliance of this law, BESE added these requirements in Bulletin 741.

Technical Assistance Support

CDC-RFA-DP23-002 (Healthy School Communities in Louisiana) is a five-year grant (SY 2023-2028) supporting the Coordinated School Health model through the Louisiana Department of Education and Well-Ahead Louisiana. The project aims to:

- Increase schools with School Health Index (SHI) action plans.
- Increase implementation of Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs (CSPAP).
- Increase school nutrition and food security policies and practices.
- Increase school-based health services for students with chronic health conditions.
- Increase student physical activity, healthy dietary behaviors, and self-management of chronic health conditions.



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At LDOE, our division is the third year of a 5 year grant to help school systems in the development of their local SHACs. The project known as the Healthy School Communities in Louisiana grant's goals are to increase schools with SHI action plans, increase the implementation of Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs, school nutrition and food security policies and practices, increase school based health services for students with chronic health conditions, and increase student physical activity, healthy dietary habits, and promotion of self management of chronic health conditions by students affected.

Safe and Healthy Schools Role

Safe and Healthy Schools is under the Division of Career and College Readiness at LDOE. SHS is the steward of the Healthy School Communities in Louisiana Grant and can help provide school systems with:

- Guidance in establishing SHACs
- Resources on how to assess their school health needs
- Tools in helping to develop action plans for identified school health needs
- Support on how to maintain district and school level SHACs

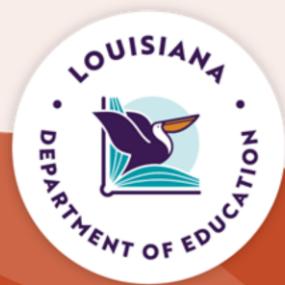
For questions and more information contact us at healthyschools@la.gov.



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As mentioned before, the safe and health schools division within Career and College Readiness at LODE is the steward of this grant. We are here to assist in the guidance of establishing SHACs, provide resources on assessment tools for schools health needs, tools in action planning and support on maintenance of school systems district and school level SHACs. You can contact us for questions, assistance at Healthyschools@la.gov.

Special Diet Prescriptions



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Our school systems have students that require special diets due to health conditions. We will now discuss the processes that need to take place for these students and the documentation that the schools should have in place. Your school RNs will help you with this process.

Special Diet Prescriptions



Prescriptions provided by licensed prescriber

- Food substitutions
- Modified textures
- Any licensed prescriber in U.S.



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As most of you already know, students can have special diet requirements for various health reasons. Parents/guardians of students with food allergies or swallowing issues may present a diet prescription to the school cafeteria to accommodate their needs. Diet prescriptions should be written by a licensed prescriber and now we can accept a prescription from any state in the United States. The school RN should receive a copy of the diet prescription.

Individual Health Plans



- Student health information
- Emergency Action Plans
- Emergency Medications



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The individual health plan will be developed by the school RN once they receive the diet prescription for the student.. If the student does not have any current health information on file, the school RN will contact the parent and discuss the students current health concerns, diagnoses, current attending physicians, and gather signatures from the parent to request medical records. If the diet prescription that the parent provided does not have enough information such as food to substitute for food allergies, then the nurse will also request this information from the parent and or their healthcare provider. This can be done by submitting a diet prescription form that the school uses or requesting the physician to put the information missing in writing. After all information is received, the school RN will develop an Individual Health Plan for the student. This may or may not require an emergency action plan and medication orders for emergency medications to be administered at school for the student specific. The school RN will also educate the teachers and staff on the emergency action plan and emergency medications who have the student on a daily basis.

Special Diet Form

- Covers the questions needed for the Individual Health Plan
- Asks what foods to omit
- Asks what foods to substitute
- Requires medical prescribers signature
- Provides student diagnosis and texture modifications

DIET PRESCRIPTION for MEALS at SCHOOL					
Student's Name _____			Age, _____		
School _____			Grade/Classroom _____		
Parent's Name _____					
Address _____		Street or P. O. Box _____	City, _____	State _____	Telephone _____
Does the student have a disability that requires a special diet? If Yes, describe the major life activities affected by the disability. (See back of form for further information.) Yes, _____ No, _____					
If the student is not disabled, list the medical condition that requires special nutritional or feeding needs.					
Diet Prescription (Check all that apply):					
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetic		<input type="checkbox"/> Increased Calorie _____ #kcal			
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Allergy		<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced Calorie _____ #kcal			
<input type="checkbox"/> Hypoglycemic		<input type="checkbox"/> Texture Modification Chopped _____ Ground _____			
<input type="checkbox"/> PKU		<input type="checkbox"/> Pureed _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Liquified _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Tube Feeding		<input type="checkbox"/> Liquified Meal _____ Formula _____	
Foods Omitted and Substitutions (Please check food groups to be omitted. Identify specific foods to omit and list foods to be substituted. If necessary, attach additional information or instructions regarding the diet or feeding.)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Bread and Cereal Products		<input type="checkbox"/> Meat and Meat Alternatives		<input type="checkbox"/> Milk and Milk Products	
Specific Foods to Omit _____			Specific Foods to Substitute _____		
I certify that the above named student needs special school meals prepared as described above because of the student's disability or chronic medical condition.					
Office Address _____			Office Telephone # (_____) _____		



The Diet Prescription for Meals at School is the preferred form to be filled out by the medical provider of the student who is in need of a special diet while at school. This document contains all of the necessary information that the nurse will need to develop the student's Individualized Health Plan and Emergency Action Plan. The school can accept any form of prescription for the student but this usually results in the nurse needing to contact the provider for more information. Any form of prescription should be honored so that the student will have what is necessary to keep them safe at school. It will however require leg work by the school nurse to obtain the rest of the information needed. Your diet prescription forms should be shared with your school nurses also to prevent delays in development of any special meal plans for your students.

504 or Individual Accommodation Plans

Food Allergies can be classified as a disability if it limits one or more major life activity.



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Under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, food allergies can be classified as a disability when the allergies limit one or more major life activities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a Federal law that protects students with disabilities from being discriminated against. The Center of Disease Control states that food allergies are an adverse health effect that is caused by the bodies immune response to certain foods. These immune responses from food allergies can alter the individual's respiratory and gastrointestinal systems which are major body functions thus are "major life activities". Section 504 also recognizes that food allergies can effect breathing, eating, or concentrating which are considered also considered "major life activities". For those students who have food allergies and the food allergies require accommodations from the regular classroom schedule, then they may be in need of a 504 plan or an Individualized Accommodations Plan (IAP). The schools 504 coordinator will need to convene the IAP team to help in determining the students accommodations that are necessary for them to be successful in school.

Individual Education Plans

May already contain:

- Modified meal plans
- Food Allergy lists
- Emergency Plans
- Individual Health Plans



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Students who have an Individual Education Plan and have special diet orders should include the required documentation of students with modified meal plans and food allergies. Also attached to the IEP will be the IHP for the student. This documentation is updated annually or modified in between when there are changes to the students plan of care or educational needs. Any special diet orders for students with an IEP should be shared with the special education teacher caring for the student so they can include the documentation in the IEP. In turn, the IEP will provide the necessary documentation for billing USDA for a modified meal plan that is not within the program meal pattern.

Conclusion

Special diet orders should be shared with the school RN, 504 coordinators, and the special education teachers for the student. IHPs, 504 plans, and IEPs that include the student special diet information will cover the required documentation school districts need for reimbursement of modified diets.





Questions?

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Questions?

Resources

- [Section 504 Protections for Students with Food Allergies](#)
- [Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [School Health Care Plans for Your Children with Food Allergies](#)
- [School Meal FAQs](#)
- [National School Lunch Program](#)
- [BESE Bulletin 741](#)

