

Connecticut

Using School Food Environment Policies to Promote Healthy Eating

Problem Overview

Most U.S. children consume a large portion of their daily food intake at school. Competitive food sources (e.g., à la carte, vending, school stores) compete with federally regulated school meals, often offering less healthy foods and beverages. In Connecticut, about 1 out of 4 high school students is overweight or obese and at increased risk for developing diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other health problems.

Program/Activity Description

In 2006, Connecticut enacted legislation supporting the development of coordinated school health (CSH) initiatives and nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold at school. School districts participating in the state's Healthy Food Certification program receive monetary incentives to implement the standards.

In 2007, the Connecticut Department of Education released its *Guidelines for a Coordinated Approach to School Health*, which built directly on CDC's CSH model and supported the 2006 legislation by addressing school health services and curriculum for comprehensive health education, physical education, and nutrition education. To help strengthen school food policies, the guidelines provide specific strategies for

- Making nutritious, affordable, and appealing meals available to students.
- Creating an environment that promotes healthy eating.
- Providing classroom instruction to help students improve their health and reduce risk behaviors.

Program/Activity Outcomes

As a result of Connecticut's commitment to CSH and school nutrition standards,

- Nearly 68% of its school districts participate in the Healthy Food Certification program.
- During 2006–2010, the state reduced the percentage of secondary schools that allow students to buy soda or fruit drinks (other than 100% juice) from 40% to 3%, according to results from CDC's School Health Profiles survey.
- Only 21% of secondary schools sold less nutritious foods and beverages* anywhere outside the school food service program.

By ensuring that only healthy food options are available, schools can model healthy eating behaviors, help improve students' diets, and help young people establish lifelong healthy eating habits.

* Such as candy (chocolate or other candy); baked goods/salty snacks not low in fat; soda or fruit drinks (other than 100% juice).