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# Wellness Policy Implementation Tip Sheet

*Resources for Faith Communities*

Wellness policies are a great way for faith communities to practically apply their faith through care for the mind, body, and soul. The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative has assembled this tip sheet to assist faith communities with successful wellness policy implementation. This sheet offers suggestions for the following:

- Introducing members to the concept of a wellness policy
- Promoting healthy eating at services, special events, and celebrations
- Encouraging healthy celebrations and alternatives to food as a reward
- Sponsoring healthy fundraising
- Promoting active living

We know that faith communities are dedicated to strengthening the spiritual and physical well-being of their congregations. It is the intent of this document to encourage faith communities in this work and inspire new and creative ways for promoting the faith and health connection.

## **Introduction of the Wellness Policy Concept**

Wellness policies and the faith-health connection may be new to your congregation. The following list provides tips for introducing these concepts to your faith community, gaining their interest, and securing their support:

- Assemble a wellness policy council (e.g. work group) to guide the implementation of the policy and oversee health activities. The council should include a representative from faith leadership (e.g. Rabbi, Pastor, Imam), women's group, children's education (e.g. ministry, clubs, or groups), and individuals with expertise and/or interest in health.
- Research and compile faith specific evidence (e.g. scripture, holy text) for healthy eating and physical activity.
- Conduct a workshop, seminar or message on the connection between faith and health. Invite a member or guest faith leader to speak on the correlation.
- Gather faith members' input on wellness policy implementation including their interest level, needs, ideas, and assistance identifying potential resources.

## **Promoting Healthy Eating at Services, Special Events, and Celebrations**

Healthy eating habits are important in building and maintaining healthy bodies, preventing chronic diseases, and strengthening children's bodies and minds. Below are suggestions for encouraging healthy eating at faith-sponsored activities:

- Host a healthy food (e.g. fruits, vegetables, whole grain bread) taste test.
- Host a healthy recipe or garden/farmers' market produce cook-off.
- Host a healthy barbecue.
- Encourage members to share fruit and vegetables from their trees and gardens with members of the faith community.
- Discuss the purpose in offering healthy beverages and foods at faith-sponsored activities.
- Encourage members to adapt recipes for health.
- Highlight a nutritious food or health theme (e.g. heart healthy foods, foods of ancient times, apple dishes) at faith-sponsored meals and in communications.

### **Healthy Celebrations and Alternatives to Food as a Reward**

Fellowship is an important aspect of the faith community. It gives members time to refresh, strengthen relationships, and develop a deeper commitment to their faith. Many times of fellowship from celebrations to children's instruction involve snacks or food. The following list provides ideas for healthy celebrations and alternatives to food as a reward, particularly during children's activities:

#### **Healthy Celebrations**

- Fresh fruit and cheese kabobs with low-fat, low-sugar whipped topping
- Dried fruit (e.g. banana chips, apple chips)
- Vegetable tray with hummus or peanut butter
- Whole grain crackers or pretzels
- Rice cakes
- Graham crackers
- Fruit cups in their own juice
- Applesauce cups
- Low-fat pudding cups
- Trail mix
- Nuts and seeds
- String cheese
- Whole-grain waffles with fruit
- Whole grain cereal
- 100% fruit smoothies

#### **Alternatives to Food as a Reward**

- Write a note of thanks or acknowledgement
- Hold activities and classes outside
- Provide a physical activity break (e.g. jump rope, trip to the park, walk)
- Pencils
- Stickers
- Books
- Youth leader, teacher, youth or adolescent performs special skill (e.g. singing, cart wheel, playing the guitar, drawing)
- Art time that relates to the day's class or message
- Brain teasers or crossword puzzles
- Coupons to music store, local gym pass, or sports activities
- Youth or adolescent leads an activity
- Youth and adolescents earn fake money for specified privileges
- Games or game time
- Movie party
- Members brainstorm nonfood rewards and use the list as a guide

#### **Healthy Fundraising**

Many faith communities use fundraising to support mission trips, community outreach, building projects, and special activities within their faith community. Listed below are several options to support member activities, needs, and health:

- Books, calendars, cookbooks
- Brick/stone memorials
- Candles
- Flowers, plants and bulbs
- Greeting cards
- Auction
- Bike-a-thon
- Golf tournament
- Rent-a-teen helper
- Recycling
- Walk-a-thon
- Healthy night-out including dinner and childcare
- Singing telegrams
- Talent show
- Holiday wreaths/decorations
- Car wash
- Sell fruit
- Yard sale
- Book reading contest
- Crafts

### Promoting Active Living

The faith community can serve as a safe and supportive place for people of all ages to take part in physical activity. During lesson time or a special class; families, friends, and neighbors can come together to learn about and practice stewardship of the body. Below are a few suggestions for promoting physical activity at faith centers:

- Organize a walking club or monthly walk with the pastor, rabbi, or faith leader
- Start a walking school bus (<http://www.panaonline.org/programs/khz/actionkits/wsb/>)
- Take a nature walk when discussing the creation story
- Partner with organizations like the YMCA to host physical activity classes
- Provide children 5-10 minute physical activity breaks during lessons
- Provide structured physical activity at faith-run preschools and before and after-school programs
- Promote a walk or bike to faith center day
- Sign-up for free walking programs like America on the Move ([www.americaonthemove.org](http://www.americaonthemove.org))
- Visit 2-1-1 San Diego and click on the green apple icon to find healthy living resources in your neighborhood with the *Nutrition, Physical Activity, Healthy Weight, and Diabetes Database* ([www.211sandiego.org](http://www.211sandiego.org))

This document was adapted from the Ohio Action for Healthy Kids *Parent Guide to Creating Nutrition and Physical Activity Changes in Schools*.

Core funding for the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative provided in part by:



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