



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**DOH-DOE PARTNERSHIP MAKES HEALTHY
CHANGES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS STATEWIDE**

HONOLULU – Unhealthy beverages sold on campus, selling candies for fundraisers, and the use of trans fat in preparing meals in cafeterias will soon become a thing of the past in all Hawai'i public schools thanks to the development and implementation of the Department of Education's new Wellness Guidelines. The Wellness Guidelines include standards for food sold or provided on campus, nutrition education, physical education and activity and supports professional development for school staff. This is part of a national movement prompted by the U. S. Department of Agriculture Child Reauthorization Act. The federal mandate requires all school food authorities that participate in the National Lunch Program to establish and implement wellness policies to promote healthy schools.

In anticipation of the new federal law, the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) Healthy Hawai'i Initiative and Hawai'i State Department of Education (DOE) brought together a diverse group of state, local, and school level stakeholders. Through this collaboration, Hawai'i has developed one of the most comprehensive Wellness Guidelines in the nation.

"The commitment to the whole child – mind and body, brought the partners together to develop the Wellness Guidelines for Hawai'i" said DOE Superintendent Patricia Hamamoto. "The Department of Education and Department of Health continue to work together on helping schools implement the Wellness Guidelines for the children and youth of Hawai'i."

The development of the Wellness Guidelines is an extension of an eight-year DOH-DOE partnership that supports health education, physical education, physical activity, and nutrition services. More than 5,300 teachers, counselors, school food service staff, and a variety of other school employees have participated in DOE-DOH organized trainings thus far.

Over the next four years, the Wellness Guidelines should lead to significant changes in all public schools and affect students, teachers, school administrators and companies that do business with Hawai'i's public schools. For example, the policy prohibits the sale of any product that lists sugar as its primary ingredient. This means school fundraisers, which often include the sale of candy or cookies, will have to change.

"The changes being implemented help to reverse unhealthy trends and behaviors that have become the norm and protect practices that are currently in place that are beneficial to the health of our keiki," stated Director of Health Chiyome Fukino, M.D. "Implementing the Wellness Guidelines will surround students, as well as teachers and staff, with an environment that makes it easier to make healthy choices."

To accommodate differences between schools, schools will be allowed to select components of the guidelines to implement each year over a four-year rollout plan. DOE requires all components of the guidelines be in place by June 2011.

"This is a significant step forward in developing lifelong healthy living habits among our children," said Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr. "We are taking a comprehensive approach to providing children healthy school environments through consistent practices from the classroom to the cafeteria to the playground. The Wellness Guidelines act as the official policy for the Hawai'i State Public School System."

This month the DOE and DOH are hosting workshops for school teams to help them implement the Wellness Guidelines. The workshops are geared to make the four-year implementation as smooth as possible. The State is also planning a summer workshop for businesses which provide fundraiser options for schools. Businesses will gain in-depth knowledge of fundraising nutrition guidelines and have the option to work with wellness staff on reformulating recipes and introducing new products.

Support the Wellness Guidelines by becoming a part of your school's Wellness Team or become a part of the state level partnerships. Interested community members and businesses can e-mail healthyschools@doh.hawaii.gov for more information on being a part of the Wellness Guidelines implementation process.

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