

# Research Rundown

## Article:

### District Wellness Policy Nutrition Standards Are Associated with Healthier District Food Procurement Practices in the United States

## What did this study examine?

Local wellness policies often contain specific nutrition standards that outline what can be sold to students during the school day. Similarly, food procurement practices often exist to require that schools purchase foods with specific nutrient standards. This study investigated the extent to which nutrition standards in wellness policies may be associated with healthier nutrition standards in district-level purchasing specifications. **Six specific nutritional characteristics were analyzed through meal costs, reports, and wellness policy studies:**

- calories
- saturated fat
- total sugar
- total fat
- sodium
- trans fat

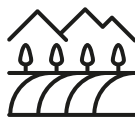
## Key findings:

District food purchasing specifications were relatively prevalent, ranging from **61%** of SFAs restricting total or added sugars to **84%** of SFAs restricting trans fats. The districts were predominantly small and located in rural areas or small townships. Additionally, the majority of district wellness policies required or suggested standards for the nutrients of interest. Overall, the two factors consistently associated with district food purchasing specifications were having a district policy and being in a rural area.



### District Policy Findings

District food purchasing specifications regarding **saturated fats** and **total or added sugars** were **more common** in districts with policies as compared to no policy at all.



### Rural Area Findings

Districts located in **rural areas** were **more likely** to have food purchasing specification standards for calories and trans fats compared to districts located in large-to-mid-size cities.

## Put it into practice!

1

Look at your policy! Confirm that your school(s) have a Local Wellness Policy, and that it includes nutrient standards for school lunches, smart snacks, food purchased for events or vending machines, etc.

2

Check your purchasing specifications! Verify that your purchasing specifications are in line with meal pattern regulations and Dietary Guidelines for trans and saturated fats, calories, added sugars, and sodium.

3

Rural schools, take note! Purchasing methods vary greatly by school size and location. Ensure that you research the best, nutritious products that also fit your schools needs and budget!

#### Reference:

Piekarz-Porter E, Leider J, Turner L, Chiqui JF. District Wellness Policy Nutrition Standards Are Associated with Healthier District Food Procurement Practices in the United States. *Nutrients*. 2020 Nov 7;12(11):3417. doi: 10.3390/nu12113417. PMID: 33171701; PMCID: PMC7694957.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.