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Joan Claybrook, President

Irradiated Food & Model School Wellness Policy

Model Wellness Policies

The Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act in 2004 requires every school district that participates in federal school meals programs to pass a Local Wellness Policy (LWP) by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year (Public Law 108-265 Section 204). The Local Wellness Policy is a significant development in education and health policy because it requires schools to address nutrition and physical activity, as well as creates an opportunity for greater public input into health in the school environment.

What must be addressed in the LWP?

- ◆ Set goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote health
- ◆ Provide guidelines for all foods available in schools during the school day
- ◆ Be no less restrictive than federal guidelines for school meals
- ◆ Establish a way to measure the implementation of the LWP

Who should be involved in creating the LWP?

- ◆ Parents, students, school food service representatives, the school board, school administrators, and the general public.

The Local Wellness Policy is an excellent opportunity to address the issue of serving irradiated food in school meals.

Irradiation – A Toxic Technology

Irradiation is a technology that exposes food to high doses of ionizing radiation to kill bacteria. In the process, irradiation depletes vitamins and nutrients and causes the creation of new chemicals – some of which do not naturally occur in food and have never been studied for safety by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Some of the byproducts of irradiating food may promote cancer development and cause genetic damage to cells. Moreover, there is scarce research on the long-term health effects on children who are exposed to toxic chemicals in foods. Existing studies indicate that children are more susceptible to environmental toxins because their bodies are still developing and they proportionally consume more food, water, and oxygen than adults.

Irradiated Foods in School Meals

Nationwide, schools are taking a greater interest in the nutritional standards and wholesomeness of food being served to children at school. In addition to fat and calorie content, the level of

environmental toxins in food is of increasing concern to parents, teachers and school board officials. A 2003 decision to allow irradiated ground beef into the National School Lunch Program was met with tremendous opposition from the public. Since then, school districts across the country have debated whether serving this food to school children is appropriate, and 11 school districts, including Los Angeles and the District of Columbia, have banned irradiated foods from their meal programs.

Sample Policy Requirements for the Model Local Wellness Policy

1. **Ban irradiated foods:** Eleven school districts have banned irradiated foods from being served in their school meal programs. This measure can be included as a separate section of a Local Wellness Policy (see Appendix I) or as part of a nutrition component of a Local Wellness Policy (see Appendix II)
2. **Right-to-Know Requirement:** The public has overwhelmingly opposed the inclusion of irradiated foods in school lunches, despite the recent decision to allow irradiated ground beef in the National School Lunch Program. In school meals, irradiated food does not have to be labeled. Require school board approval, parental notification, and labeling for irradiated food prior to it being served to students.

Additional Resources

Food Irradiation

- ◆ Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program
<http://www.safelunch.org>
- ◆ The Cancer Prevention Coalition
<http://www.preventcancer.com>
- ◆ Minnesota Voices for Choices
<http://www.mnvoicesforchoices.org>

Model Local Wellness Policies

- ◆ USDA's Team Nutrition Website, Basic Information on the Law:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy.html>
- ◆ Food Research & Action Center, General Information
http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/cnreauthor/wellness_policies.htm
- ◆ Center for Ecoliteracy, Rethinking School Lunch
<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/programs/rsl.html>
- ◆ Community Food Security Coalition, Farm-to-School Programs
http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html
- ◆ National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, Model School Wellness Policy
<http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org>



WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE
215 Pennsylvania Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20003 ph:
(202) 454-5185
f: (202) 546-5562
www.citizen.org/cmep
ahill@citizen.org

CALIFORNIA OFFICE
1615 Broadway, 9th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
ph: (510) 663-0888
f: (510) 663-8569
www.citizen.org/california
california@citizen.org

APPENDIX 1

Respectfully Submitted to the [DISTRICT NAME] District School Board
[DATE]

A Resolution in Support of Keeping Food Safe for All Students

Submitted by: [Group or Individual Name]

WHEREAS: Each day, [DISTRICT NAME] school district students trust that the foods they eat in cafeterias are wholesome and safe; and

WHEREAS: The school board is charged with the responsibility of ensuring the safety of foods provided at schools within the [DISTRICT NAME] school district for human consumption; and

WHEREAS: Despite the fact that much of the research done on irradiated foods is over twenty years old and expressed the need for more long-term research on the unique radiolytic products created in irradiated food, current US laws regulating the production and retail of irradiated foods are still based on these studies and the FDA has never studied the long-term effects of consuming irradiated food; and

WHEREAS: Recent research in Germany, using more technologically advanced techniques and equipment, has led to the belief by many scientists, here and abroad, that irradiated foods are unsafe; and

WHEREAS: Current federal laws do not require irradiated foods served in schools to be labeled as such, and because schools are increasingly being targeted by the food irradiation industry through such programs as the National School Lunch Program, there is increasing likelihood that children may consume unsafe foods without their knowledge or the consent of their parents; and

WHEREAS: Current federal laws do not require certain irradiated food ingredients to be labeled, there is likelihood that the school district may be unknowingly purchasing irradiated foods.

FURTHER RESOLVED: The [DISTRICT NAME] school district shall not purchase any food products that can be reasonably believed to have been processed using any form of ionizing radiation (irradiation).

APPENDIX 2

September 3, 2004

News Release

Seattle School Board Approves
Comprehensive Suite of Nutrition Policies
Sales of Sodas and Junk Food Banned on School Campuses

The Seattle School Board has unanimously approved a comprehensive and far-reaching set of nutrition-related policies designed to provide students with healthy food and beverage choices during the school day. Specifically, the policies will ban sales of all foods containing high levels of sugar and fat, improve the quality and appeal of school meal programs, and prohibit contracts with beverage vendors for "exclusive pouring rights."

These policies are amongst the strongest in the country, and confirm the Board's commitment to eliminating barriers to learning by creating a healthy nutrition environment in all 100 schools.

"These policies make it clear that we are determined to provide our students with healthy food options," said School Board Vice-President Brita Butler-Wall. "We are committed to providing an environment at each school that maximizes students' ability to learn and succeed. That includes ensuring that foods and beverages sold at schools are healthy and nutritious."

The new policies require all foods and beverages sold and distributed during the school day to meet nutrition guidelines and follow certain portion sizes. This provision will go into effect immediately at elementary and middle schools, and beginning February 1, 2005 at high schools. Exclusive 'pouring rights' contracts will be prohibited, and the current exclusive contract with Coca-Cola will be phased out within one year. The policies also give direction to the school meal program and others to offer fresh, local, organic, non-genetically-modified, **non-irradiated**, unprocessed food, whenever feasible.

Butler-Wall praised Shelley Curtis, Nutrition Director for the Children's Alliance, for leading the research team that developed the policies over a six-month period. The nutrition sub-committee of the School Board relied on the expertise of more than 60 health and nutrition experts and community members. In adopting these policies, Seattle leads the way on a new state law requiring districts to adopt nutrition policies by 2005.

The new and amended policies include:

Policy [E11.00, Food Service](#) , and Procedure [E11.01, Breakfast and Lunch Program](#)

Policy [E13.00, Food Sales](#) , and Procedure [E13.01, Distribution and Sales of Competitive Foods](#)

Procedure [C30.01, Advertising and Commercial Activities](#)

The [report of the nutrition committee](#) is available on the District's Web site at <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/committees.xml> and School Board Policies are available at <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/policies/index.dxml>