

INSTRUCTION

**Nutrition Services:**

**Rationale.** Students must go to school with minds and bodies ready to take advantage of the learning environment schools work so hard to develop. Good nutrition is a prime factor in the student's ability to learn. In addition to families, the school environment plays a vital role in shaping students' nutritional health throughout the growing years in the following ways:

- Students eat one or two of their meals in the school cafeteria;
- Classroom teachers provide factual instruction on human health and biology;
- Peer relationships and adult role models influence eating patterns and provide subtle but strong messages in body image development;
- Physical education and school sports programs strengthen students' bodies and often are sources of nutrition information; and
- School health services, guidance counselors and classroom teachers provide essential support for students' physical and psychological growth.

**Nutrition services** complement and enhance school health services. Students who may benefit most from school-based nutrition services include:

- Children with special health care needs;
- Adolescents who are obese, underweight, follow a vegetarian diet or have other related issues (e.g., eating disorders);
- Students living in impoverished conditions with limited access to nutritionally adequate food; and
- Students who abuse substances such as food, drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

Optimally, nutrition services are provided on the school premises by a qualified nutrition professional that is recognized as a valued member of the health care team. The school nurse, dietitian, food service director and teachers should work collaboratively to successfully integrate nutrition into the school's comprehensive health program.

(If the district does not have a school nurse and/or dietitian, the school might consider negotiation with the local hospital or health district to secure the services of an outpatient nurse and/or dietitian. The dietitian could serve as an integral member of the school health advisory team and work collaboratively with the team to screen and assess students' nutritional status and provide counseling, referral and follow-up services.)

Nutrition services are linked to physical education, school meals and health promotion programs in the school and community.

**Nutrition-Related Health Problems.** Headaches, stomach upsets, and general malaise and common complaints may be a direct result of poor nutrition. Other nutritional

concerns including restrictive dieting, distorted body images, eating disorders and obesity may have an indirect effect on learning, and be significant predictors of a teen's success in school.

School counselors and school health services staff shall consistently promote healthy eating to students and other staff. These professionals shall be prepared to recognize conditions such as obesity, eating disorders, and other nutrition-related health problems among students and staff and be able to refer them to appropriate services.

Cross Reference: 8200 Healthy Lifestyles

Legal Reference: I.C. § 33-512 Governance of Schools

Policy History:

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