

R-II Works to Improve Student Wellness

Did you know that a health committee is working very hard to develop a district wellness program to improve the health of all students in Montgomery County R-2 Schools?

This project is in response to a federal law that requires all school districts that participate in the National School Lunch program to establish a local wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. This law, Children Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, has some special requirements:

- District wellness policy must be developed by a committee that includes parents, students, food service representative, Board members, administrators and members of the public.
- Nutritional guidelines selected by the district apply to all foods available during the school day and should promote student health and reduce childhood overweight.
- Goals for nutrition education and physical activity should be set which are designed to promote student wellness.

This law comes at a time when there is great national concern that our children are not getting the physical activity and balanced nutrition needed to promote optimal health.

For the first time in history, medical experts are concerned that unless changes are made, life expectancy for children may become shorter than that of their parents.

Fortunately for the school district, it has a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) which for several years has worked to promote student wellness. With just a few additions, its membership matched the ones required in this law. SHAC has found this

assignment to be a challenging one. It is currently working very hard to assess our schools' current health policies and programs. Once weaknesses are identified, then appropriate goals to promote student wellness for students in Montgomery County must be set. SHAC is reviewing volumes of best practice guidelines in attempt to set these goals. Once these recommendations for Wellness Policy and procedures are developed, it then goes to the School Board for adoption.

So you see, there is great interest in student wellness in Montgomery County. In upcoming articles current trends and recommendations in student nutrition and physical activity will be shared. If you have interest in joining the SHAC in its effort for student wellness, please contact Janet Stumbaugh at 573-564-2278, Carla Parker RN at 573-564-3711, or Holly Rodgers RN at 573-929-3211 or 636-488-5923.

Submitted by Holly Rodgers