

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Building a School Wellness Team
- New school health mandates for schools with the passage of AB 2706
- Joint/shared use agreements to increase physical activity

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

New Teacher Induction Training 2

CDC's Food Allergy Toolkit 2

Alternative rewards 3

Smarter Lunchroom Movement 3

Safe Routes to School 4



# Prevention First School Health Team

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## Building a Team to Improve School Health

Many districts have established wellness committees to improve the health of students and staff as a support to enhancing student academic performance. Typically a school district wellness committee includes representatives from the superintendent's office as well as other district level staff. Also community stakeholders often serve on the committee to provide expertise and material resources relevant to school health. A core function for all school district wellness committees is to at least annually update and strengthen the district's student wellness policy, as needed. School health and wellness teams manifest in a variety of configurations and may go by various names such as school health councils, wellness committees, or coordinated school health committees. Yet they all retain a common goal: to improve school health and make schools healthier places where students can best learn. Anyone, including parents, teachers, administrators, food

service personnel, school nurses, students, and community members, can serve on a health or wellness team. Together these individuals work to identify health concerns, implement strategies that promote health, raise funds, promote and celebrate successful health initiatives, and



develop resources to help others replicate their efforts and results.

Successful school districts are able to implement the requirements of their wellness policies at their school sites. However, many school districts struggle with this approach due to competing priorities and financial challenges.

To address school health issues, a Prevention First (PF) campaign was formed. PF represents a collaboration

between the California Department of Public Health and the California Department of Education (CDE), which includes a student health focus. Specifically the PF student wellness strategies address improving school nutrition, increasing physical education and physical activity opportunities (including Safe Routes to School), and improving management and care for students with chronic conditions, with an emphasis on asthma and food allergies. PF works at the state, county, and community level to improve the health of K-12 students. You are encouraged to check our [PF resources and services](#).

One of PF's partner initiatives, CDE's "Team California for Healthy Kids," has compiled a number of [school wellness policy resources](#) you may find helpful. Remember to give priority to supporting student health at both the school district and school site levels.



## Helping Students Control Their Asthma

Good [asthma management](#) is essential for getting control of asthma. In school settings, it means helping students to:

- Follow their written [asthma action plan](#);
- Have quick and easy access to their [asthma medications](#);

- Recognize their [asthma triggers](#) (the factors that make asthma worse or cause an asthma attack); and

- Avoid or control asthma triggers.

You can also help by modifying physical activities to match students' current asthma

status, or peak flow reading.

Good asthma management offers important benefits, including allowing students who have asthma to participate fully in [physical activities](#) and other regular school activities.

### New Teacher Induction Training Series

Schools play a critical role in promoting the health and safety of young people and helping them establish life-long healthy behaviors. Research also has shown that school health programs can reduce the prevalence of risky behaviors among young people and have a positive effect on academic performance.

To add to a teacher's toolbox of skills, the *Prevention First School Health Team* would like to provide one-hour trainings on how teachers can support healthy behaviors in the classroom on the following health topics:

- Asthma
- Nutrition
- Food Allergies
- Physical Activity

## Managing Food Allergies in Schools

Food allergies are a growing food safety and public health concern that affect an estimated 4%–6% of children in the United States. Allergic reactions can be life threatening and have far-reaching effects on children and their families, and on the schools



they attend. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released a

[Food Allergies in School Toolkit](#). CDC's tool kit contains tip sheets, training presentations, and podcasts to help school staff implement the [Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies](#) in order to prevent and manage severe allergic reactions in schools.

## Health Insurance Coverage for Students

**Back To School 2015**  
ALL IN For Health has made it easy for schools to share information about health coverage and care. Download or [order](#) their Back to School toolkit materials and send them home with students to spread

the word about affordable coverage options.

**Learn How Schools Can Promote Health Coverage and Care**  
[2015–2016 School Year Calendar](#): Schools can promote health coverage and care all year long.

Keep this flyer handy for simple ideas to engage students and families.

[AB 2706 Fact Sheet](#): This year, California schools are required to provide health coverage enrollment information to families at the beginning of the school year.

# Creating Supportive Nutrition Environments in Schools



The dietary behaviors of children and adolescents are influenced by many sectors of society. Schools play a particularly critical role in establishing a safe and supportive environment with policies and

practices that support healthy behaviors. Schools can provide opportunities for student to learn about practicing healthy eating behaviors. The types of foods and beverages offered throughout the school day can have an impact on student health. To create a school environment that supports health, school administrators can ensure that nutrition education is part of a comprehensive school health education curriculum and that

school-based marketing and fundraising are consistent with supporting healthy choices. The PF School Health Team collaborates at the state, county, and community level to assist school districts and schools in the development and implementation of policies and practices that create a supportive nutrition environment. For more information and resources, visit [Prevention First](#).

## Constructive Classroom Rewards: Promoting Good Habits While Protecting Children's Health

According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, rewarding children in the classroom need not involve candy and other foods that can undermine children's diets and health and reinforce unhealthful eating habits. A wide variety of [alternative rewards](#) can



be used to provide positive reinforcement for children's behavior and academic

performance. Providing food based on performance or behavior connects food to mood. This practice can encourage children to eat treats even when they are not hungry and can instill lifetime habits of rewarding or comforting themselves with food and can be associated with unhealthy eating or obesity.

*"It's just a little treat."  
What's the harm in using food to reward children?"*

## Smarter Lunchroom Movement- "It's Not Nutrition Until It's Eaten"

The Smarter Lunchroom Movement (SLM) was developed with the goal of creating research-based lunchrooms that guide healthy choices, which are also sustainable and low cost. It is a grassroots movement for those who are concerned about the way kids eat and wish to change unhealthy behaviors.

The smarter lunchrooms core values include:

- Low and no-cost solutions
- Lunchroom environment focus
- Promotion of healthful eating behaviors
- Sustainability

The SLM of California (SLM of CA) Collaborative helps California child nutrition professionals design their lunch lines to market the school meal program and to encourage students to enjoy eating healthier foods. The SLM

of CA Collaborative leverages resources from state level agencies including: the CDE, California Food Policy Advocates, Dairy Council of California, University of California CalFresh Nutrition Education Program, and Kaiser.

For more information about training, please visit the SLM of CA [Training](#) webpage.

# Safe Routes to School

## What is Safe Routes to School?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is an International movement that started over 15 years ago in order to increase the number of children who can, and do, safely walk and bicycle to school. The two primary goals of SRTS are 1) where it is safe, get kids walking and biking and 2) where it's not safe, make it safe.

Schools across the national have successfully started a SRTS program because of its recognized benefits such as improved safety for pedestrians and bicyclists; reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality around schools; identification of needed infrastructure improvements; and getting students to increase their physical activity levels before and after school.

Popular SRTS activities include Walk to School Day or Bike to School Day events; conducting walk audits to identify barriers to increasing walking and biking to school; starting a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train program; and sustaining SRTS programs and activities through local school wellness policy adoption by school boards. For more information on Safe Routes to School, visit:

[www.casaferoutestoschool.org](http://www.casaferoutestoschool.org) or [www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NEOPB/Pages/PrevFirstWebLinks.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NEOPB/Pages/PrevFirstWebLinks.aspx)

## Open Use Policies: Unlocking School Gates

Other than during school hours, many students lack adequate physical activity opportunities and resources that are safe and easily-accessible. School districts are often reluctant to open up their outdoor facilities during non-school hours because they fear increases in graffiti, vandalism and liability unless there is an organized agreement (such as a "Joint Use Agreement") for supervision by an outside organization.

One study, reported in the American Journal of Public Health (Farley, T et.al, 2007), showed that 84% of children were more active in areas with

open, unsupervised school yards than in communities with closed facilities.

Despite perceived fears, opening school grounds to the public can play an important role in supporting community safety. Open-use can foster a broader sense of community

ownership of the space.

More people utilizing spaces that are typically deserted during non-school hours generate activity and provide more "eyes" that may deter graffiti and vandalism.

Finally, open-use can decrease criminal activity by providing a place for youth and others in the community to engage in healthy activities, create social bonds and stay out of trouble. All children deserve to have a safe and convenient place that allows for them to be active!



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