

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 nutritional information; and
- School health services, guidance counselors and classroom teachers provide essential support for students' physical and psychological growth.

Nutritional services complement and enhance school health services. Nutritional services include screening, assessment, counseling/education and referral and follow-up 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, dietician, food service director and teachers should work collaboratively to successfully integrate nutrition into the school's comprehensive health program.

Nutrition services are linked to physical education, school meals, and health promotion programs in the school and community. At a minimum, the nutrition services program will:

- Provide standard nutrition screening;
- Establish a well-defined plan for follow up of students and referral to community-based services; and
- Provide recommendation for physical activities.

Nutrition-Related Health Problems. Headaches, stomach upsets, and general malaise, common complaints in the school nurse's office, 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.

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LEGAL REFERENCE:

Idaho Code Sections 33-512 Governance of Schools

ADOPTED: 5/8/2006

AMENDED: