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California State
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CALIFORNIA STATE PTA
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July 11, 2005

Dear Parent Teachers Association Leaders:

The California Department of Education (CDE) and the California State Parent Teachers Association (PTA) are joining to notify you about an important new federal law requiring school boards across the country to adopt and implement a district-wide school wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006-07 school year. The law includes a requirement that parents/guardians and the community be involved in the development of this new policy. This is an excellent opportunity for your PTA to participate in a meaningful way to address school health issues.

Specifically, the federal Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires each school board in districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (42 USC 1751-1769) or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 USC 1771-1791, including the School Breakfast Program) to adopt and implement a policy that, at a minimum, must include the following:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the district determines is appropriate.
- Nutrition guidelines selected by the district for all foods available on each campus during the school day, with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.
- An assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals will not be less restrictive than federal regulations and guidance issued pursuant to 42 USC 1758(f)(1), 1766(a) and 1779(a) and (b), as they apply to schools.
- A plan for measuring implementation of the wellness policy, including the designation of one or more persons in the district or at each school charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the policy.

The law requires that certain persons be involved in the development of the student wellness policy. They include parents/guardians, students, school food service professionals, school administrators, school board representatives, and members of the public. We encourage school boards to expand the categories of persons involved to include teachers, health educators, classified staff, school nurses, physical educators, and other appropriate school representatives. Members of the public could be specified to include health professionals, representatives of city and county agencies, representatives of

community organizations, food vendors, and others. It is imperative that we promote and support a culture of health and fitness in our schools. Accordingly:

- The National PTA supported the passage of the federal bill and advocated for the language requiring wellness policies. The PTA continues to work with policymakers and other child nutrition advocates to disseminate information about this new requirement and to pass other legislation to address child nutrition and wellness in the schools.
- The CDE has made improving student health, nutrition, and fitness one of its top three educational priorities for 2005 and has called upon the California State PTA to join in this effort.
- The CDE recently also released its White Paper, *Healthy Children Ready to Learn*, which underscores the importance of improving the school health environment through a variety of means including implementation of school wellness policies.

Building upon the recommendations in the White Paper related to wellness policies, the CDE is sponsoring legislation (Senate Bill 567/Torlakson) that calls for districts to:

- Align their school wellness policies with both federal and state regulations and statutes.
- Support, when developing these policies:
 - The coordinated school health system, consisting of health education, physical education, health services, nutrition services, psychological and counseling services, health promotion for staff, a safe and healthy school environment, and parent and community involvement.
 - High quality physical education and health education, as outlined in the most current editions of the *Physical Framework for California Public Schools* and the *Health Framework for California Public Schools* and as specified in California *Education Code (EC)* sections 51210, 51890, 51891, 51220-22, and 51225. These *EC* sections specify the required and recommended comprehensive health education and physical education components for grades one through twelve.

We strongly recommend that districts act now to begin the policy development process so there will be sufficient time to establish or expand an existing School Health Advisory Council to gather input from other interested stakeholders, develop thoughtful recommendations on a variety of topics, and allow ample time for the Board's deliberations, adoption and implementation of the policy. (See School Health Councils and PTA included in the California State PTA service mailing.)

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The National PTA also joined with the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA) to develop a model local school wellness policy. You can see this model policy on the NANA Web site at <http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org>. The California School Boards Association (CSBA) developed a policy template that outlines the content areas for the district wellness policy. The NANA model policy and the CSBA template, along with resources provided by the CDE, are included on the diskette provided with the California State PTA service mailing.

Currently the CDE and the California State PTA are partnering with other state agencies, and a variety of nutrition and education groups (the same groups referred to in the federal law that local districts must collaborate with) to develop a model policy and guidelines prior to December 2005. Once available, the CSBA will translate this California-focused model policy into board policy language; this language, along with additional policy guidance will be available in December 2005.

The CDE also will provide you the current state and federal regulations, policies, and statutes that are pertinent to the establishment of school wellness policies. Building upon its collaboration with other state agencies and organizations, the CDE will also post statewide and regional trainings on this subject and other resources on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov>.

Each school board, while ensuring that the minimum federal policy requirements are met, must ultimately adopt its own unique policies on student wellness that are research-based, reflect local needs and philosophy, and promote student health as a way to support student achievement. It is up to every PTA leader to speak up for all children's health and to make these policies meaningful. **We urge all PTAs to work with their schools and school districts on developing and implementing effective wellness policies.**

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Pat Klotz, Vice President for Health, California State PTA, at (213) 610-1100 extension 306 or by e-mail at health@capta.org or Jan Lewis, Nutrition Education Consultant, Nutrition Services Division, CDE, at (916) 323-7185 or by e-mail at jlewis@cde.ca.gov or Michael Danzik, Nutrition Education Assistant, Nutrition Services Division, CDE, at (916) 445-7346 or by e-mail at mdanzik@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

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Enclosure