Title. Five Tips for Large-Scale Assessment of Local Wellness Policies Using the WellSAT Scoring System

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Who Are We? The AZ Health Zone administers Arizona’s SNAP-Ed program. Our multi-year, statewide evaluations follow the American Evaluation Association’s evaluation standards and guiding principles.

The Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity developed the WellSAT to measure the quality of written LWPs, in consultation with an advisory board. The WellSAT has been updated twice to reflect changes to national regulations from the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

What Did We Do? From October 2015—September 2018, the AZ Health Zone State Evaluation Team used a WellSAT scoring process to assess the quality of written school wellness policies (SWPs) from over 120 SNAP-Ed-qualified districts and schools across Arizona’s 15 counties. We prioritized low user burden and use of findings, and conducted a meta-evaluation to improve the scoring process. Consequently, we identified best practices for large-scale LWP assessment using the WellSAT.

Our Goal. To identify key characteristics of an accurate, consistent, and useful system for large-scale LWP assessment.

Our Target Audience. State SNAP-Ed agencies, health departments, and others looking to systematically assess written SWPs.

Five Tips for Success. We identified these key characteristics for large-scale SWP scoring:

1. **Use two consistent scorers.** We enhanced accuracy and consistency by comparing results from two trained, independent scorers from our team to catch errors and resolve discrepancies.

2. **Train scorers using state-specific guidelines.** We further improved accuracy and consistency by developing a state-specific scoring template. While WellSAT training is available at wellsat.org, school health policies vary by state and can influence WellSAT scores.

3. **Aim for rapid, responsive turnaround.** We bolstered the utility of findings by generating results within 4-8 weeks, or before district SWP meetings.

4. **Offer guidance on interpreting scores.** We also enhanced utility by helping users understand how their scores compared to state averages and national trends.

5. **Create easy-to-use recommendations.** We improved utility by providing users with detailed, editable, score-based recommendations on how to revise SWP language.
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