

Project Title: Safety and Wellness Survey (SAWS) Validation Project

SAWS Project Background

The initial Hawaii DOE Wellness Guidelines (WGs) were established in 2007, and public (non-charter) schools have been required to implement the WGs since 2011. The WGs help to implement Hawaii's Board of Education Policy 103-1 and fulfill the requirements of Public Law 108-265 Section 204 and the Healthy Hunger Free-Kids Act (2010). Of note, the WGs were strengthened and revised for the 2017-2018 school year.

SAWS is a self-report survey completed by school principals or another school representative meant to gauge implementation of the WGs. The survey has been administered annually since 2008, and a high response rate has made it a useful source of information. It is expected that some schools may underestimate or overestimate their SAWS responses, but the overall data trends are helpful in identifying which guidelines are difficult to implement and need the most attention. The Hawaii Departments of Education and Health (DOE and DOH) have been interested for several years in conducting a SAWS validity project to assess compliance with the WGs and the accuracy of SAWS data.

Key Activities

The Healthy Hawaii Initiative Evaluation Team (HHIET) created an online survey in Qualtrics to gather background information on the goals of this project, as well as to identify priority WGs from the full list of 34 guidelines. The survey was distributed to help determine the methodology of the validation project by allowing the critical stakeholders to narrow down and rank their objectives for this evaluation. The survey results reflect feedback from the three leading partners: (1) the Hawaii DOH Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division (CDPHPD), (2) the Hawaii DOE Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design (OCID), and (3) the Hawaii DOE School Food Services Branch (SFS).

In addition, background research was conducted to identify whether other schools or jurisdictions had previously conducted a similar validation project. It was quickly reaffirmed that Hawaii is a national leader, both in its administration of the SAWS survey and in its attempts to validate the instrument. As such, we began to consider what an on-site validation study among the 256 DOE public schools could look like, which surfaced many questions.

Finally, SMART goals were established for each of the 34 WGs. The objective was to allow schools and teachers to understand how each guideline can be measured in a uniform format to hopefully encourage schools to measure success based on the same standards. The intent was to generate clarity and promote better understanding of the guidelines to set the stage for a future validation project.

Efforts undertaken in this first phase of the SAWS Validation Project have informed a follow-on project focused on examining facilitators and barriers to successful implementation of the Wellness Guidelines. The HHIET, in collaboration with DOE and DOH, will conduct interviews with staff from a representative sample of schools across the state to develop success stories and lessons learned to help improve implementation of Hawaii's Wellness Guidelines.

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