School Nutrition
Program Guide
Congratulations on becoming a registered Let’s Go! site. This is your guide to getting started.

Let’s Go! is a nationally recognized obesity prevention initiative working with communities to create environments that support healthy eating and active living. We use evidence-based strategies to improve the policies, practices, and environments that influence behavior change.

Thank you for being a Let’s Go! partner and for your commitment to help improve the health and well-being of your community.

If you have questions about the information in this guide, please email info@letsgo.org.

Working with community and healthcare partners, we help to promote healthy messaging and encourage healthy choices where people live, learn, work, and play. Let’s Go! helps to create healthy environments by using a multi-setting model to reach community members.

We partner with:
- Schools and School Districts
- School Nutrition Programs
- Early Care and Education Programs
- Out-of-School Programs
- Healthcare Practices

Our partners use Let’s Go! Strategies to:
- Increase time for physical activity
- Promote drinking water
- Increase access to healthy foods
- Limit recreational screen time
- Encourage healthy sleep habits and much more

Your partnership with Let’s Go! is critical for creating and sustaining meaningful change not just in your physical location, but also as part of the larger community initiative.
The Role of School Nutrition Programs

Obesity is a complex, chronic disease. Overweight and obesity continue to have a major impact on the health of the entire population, from infancy to adulthood.

School Nutrition Programs can play a critical role in preventing childhood obesity.

Students consume a substantial proportion of their daily calories during the school day. School meals are important to fostering the development of students’ healthy eating habits. It is critical that schools, the district and the school nutrition programs collaborate and engage students in the work to have the greatest impact.

Let’s Go! helps:
- School Districts to adopt and implement strong wellness policies that support health and physical activity practices.
- School Nutrition Programs increase the nutritional quality of food served, make the healthy choice the easy choice and improve the perception of school meals.
- Individual Schools to bring the district wellness policy into practice and engage students in the process.

School Nutrition Programs play an essential role in serving healthy meals to support students’ health and increase their readiness to learn.

Let’s Go! is designed to help you and your staff to:

ASSESS & PLAN
using the Let’s Go! Guide to Success to set goals based on your district’s needs.

PROMOTE
the Let’s Go! program messages.

TAKE ACTION
using the program tools, resources, and community connections.

SUSTAIN
your efforts with a district wellness policy that meets state and federal mandates and supports healthy eating and active living.

COLLABORATE
with students, other schools and departments for maximum impact across the district.

HIGHLIGHT SUCCESS
with photos, videos, social media and other ideas.
Before You Get Started

Before you begin implementing the evidence-based strategies of the Let’s Go! program, here are some things to consider:

1. **Team Camaraderie is Essential**
   Engage all kitchen staff at each school and send the message that everyone has a role to play in preparing, cooking, and serving healthy foods.

2. **Attitudes and Beliefs Matter**
   When it comes to food and healthy eating habits, people’s personal experiences, cultural beliefs, and biases can vary. To be successful in building a strong school nutrition program:
   - Recognize that staff and students come with their own relationship to food and definition of health.
   - Reflect on staff skill sets and experience in the culinary field.
   - Look for possible areas of resistance and where to bolster food creativity by involving students.
   - Remember that how staff talk about and present food to students can make a difference.

3. **Youth and Adult Partnerships are Powerful**
   Students have effective and creative ideas to create environmental change in their schools and want to discuss these ideas with adults. Students feel empowered when they have voice and choice and can help build peer buy-in.

4. **The Cafeteria Environment is Important**
   Consider what your program currently does to ensure the cafeteria is a safe, accepting and inviting environment for students and staff to eat nutritious meals.
   Advocate for proper seating and accommodations for students and staff.
   Staff can foster healthy behaviors in their cafeterias by:
   - Setting up the cafeteria to ensure the healthy choice is the easy choice.
   - Creating a welcoming and inviting environment for students to easily navigate.
   - Creating a café feel using colorful signage.

5. **Be Inclusive**
   Consider what your program does to diversify meals to accommodate dietary and cultural differences. Advocate on behalf of students, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, needing seating alternatives.
   The program is designed to make sure every student can benefit regardless of ability, race or socio-economic status.
The Program Messages

5-2-1-0 for Children
The Let’s Go! 5-2-1-0 program helps children and youth to establish and live healthy behaviors every day.

The 5-2-1-0 messages are:

- 5 or more fruits and vegetables
- 2 hours or less of recreational screen time
- 1 hour or more of physical activity
- 0 sugary drinks, more water

Small Steps for Adults
The Let’s Go! Small Steps program encourages adults to make one small change at a time. These small changes can add up to big improvements in health.

The Small Steps messages are:

- Move More
  It’s a great way to improve your health
- Eat Real
  Foods that come from nature give you energy
- Drink Water
  It’s the best choice
- Rest Up
  Good sleep restores your body and mind

Your Partnership with Let’s Go!
Let’s Go! provides materials and training to you and your staff to enable you to promote healthy eating with the students and families you serve. As a Let’s Go! partner you receive:

1. Program Assistance
   From Let’s Go! to get you started and keep you motivated.

2. Tools and Resources
   to promote the nutrition program and improve the perception and quality of meals served.

3. Training and Development
   opportunities for you and your staff members.

4. Regular Communication
   to keep program information, tools, and resources at your fingertips.

5. Recognition
   for implementing Let’s Go! Strategies.

6. Connection
   to local and national organizations and other sites working to improve the health of students and families.

Let’s Go! is here to help you get started with the program.
Program Messages & Strategies
The Let’s Go! 5-2-1-0 program messages are the behaviors to encourage. To support this we have developed evidence-based strategies which align with national recommendations to increase healthy eating and active living.

### Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Message Rationales</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 or more fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Emerging science suggests fruit and vegetable consumption may help prevent weight gain, and when total calories are controlled, may be an important aid to achieving and sustaining a healthy weight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 hours or less of recreational screen time</td>
<td>Watching too much television and use of other screen media is associated with an increased prevalence of overweight and obesity, lower reading scores, and attention problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hour or more of physical activity</td>
<td>Regular physical activity can help children and adolescents improve cardiopulmonary fitness, build strong bones and muscles, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing other health conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 sugary drinks, more water</td>
<td>High intake of sugar-sweetened beverage consumption among children is associated with overweight and obesity, displacement of milk consumption, and dental cavities.</td>
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### Strategic Categories

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Category</th>
<th>Strategy Rationales</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing the school meals menu</td>
<td>Creative menu names and student involvement in menu development can positively influence selection and consumption of fruits and vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting the school meals program</td>
<td>Sharing and promoting menus to the entire school community can increase participation and improve student perception of school meals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boosting reimbursable meals</td>
<td>Highlighting reimbursable grab-and-go or featured combo meals can improve student consumption of healthy choices. Displaying signs, sample trays, and using verbal cues can increase selection of fruits and vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving healthy school breakfast</td>
<td>Including a variety of fruits and vegetables improves the quality of school breakfast. Alternative breakfast options such as grab-and-go or serving in the classroom can increase participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving healthy school lunch</td>
<td>Offering a variety of produce in the lunch line in convenient and visually appealing ways can increase fruit and vegetable consumption.</td>
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Collectively, the Let’s Go! School Nutrition Strategies nudge students to select healthier options, increase the perception of school meals, and help support the nutritional quality of food served.
The Let’s Go! Champion and Team

Every registered Let’s Go! School Nutrition Program identifies a Champion to lead the work of environmental and policy change and is encouraged to establish and/or participate in a regional workgroup.

Role of the Site Champion
The Site Champion is someone who has a good sense of District level operations and can help advocate for the adoption of the program strategies. Frequently this is the School Nutrition Director.

Role of the Regional School Nutrition Workgroup
Let’s Go! convenes regional workgroups to create networking opportunities for school nutrition professionals in neighboring districts who share an interest in improving the nutritional quality, perception, and participation in school meals. Ask Let’s Go! staff about an existing workgroup to join.

We’re here to help create sustainable environmental and policy changes that make the healthy choice the easy choice.
Let’s Go! is an annual program that supports sites interested in working towards environmental and policy change. The program can be woven into your existing structure and support you to build and sustain a healthy environment.

START HERE to join the program and follow these steps each year.

Assess & Plan
- Determine your strengths and areas of opportunity.
- Identify resources and community partners needed.
- Develop a plan and/or reflect on previous year to develop or revise your Let’s Go! goals using the Guide to Success.

Promote Messages & Partnership
- Share messages with staff and children/families.
- Build a team and gain leadership support for launching your plan.

Collaborate Across the District
- Participate in, or help to establish, a district wellness team to build consistency.
- Connect with individual schools, students, and other school departments to look for opportunities to support one another, share ideas, and leverage resources for mutual projects.

Take Action
- Implement your Let’s Go! goals.
- Communicate with team, staff, and students regarding progress.

Sustain
- Ensure district wellness policy complies with state and federal mandates to support a healthy environment.
- If modifications are needed, work with Let’s Go! to help adopt changes.

Highlight Success
- Complete the Let’s Go! Annual Survey and celebrate every achievement whether it is big or small.

Implementing the Let’s Go! Program
**The Let's Go! Annual Survey**

Every spring, Let's Go! surveys each school cafeteria to measure implementation of the Let's Go! Strategies and gather feedback on experience with the program.

**Completing the Survey is Important**

By completing the survey each year your cafeterias:

- Provide important information about how your environment is changing to support healthy school meals.
- Inform the development of new program materials and trainings.
- Build the evidence of the impact of the Let's Go! program and secures continued funding and support.
- Become eligible to achieve Let's Go! Recognition.

Kitchen managers in each school cafeteria will receive the survey by email and are strongly encouraged to seek input from other staff and/or the Let’s Go! Team when completing it to ensure accurate responses.

**Let’s Go! Recognition**

Recognition has three levels focused on sustainable change.

Participating programs are assessed each year at the cafeteria level to determine recognition status based on Annual Survey responses.

Your cafeterias can achieve Let’s Go! Recognition when the survey results show an increased number of Let’s Go! School Nutrition strategies implemented throughout the year.

**Recognized Cafeterias are Publicly Acknowledged in the Following Ways:**

- Listed as a Site of Distinction on the Let’s Go! website
- Promoted on Let’s Go! social media
- Provided a Let’s Go! poster to display proudly
- School administration receives communication from Let’s Go! leadership acknowledging recognition achievement across the district.

**Resources and Program Materials**

Let’s Go! has resources to help school nutrition program staff meet their goals to improve promotion and perception of healthy school meals in each cafeteria.

**Posters**

Posters should be hung in prominent places. Please contact us if you need new or additional posters.

**Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**

The PSAs can be shown on monitors in addition to, or in place of, posters.

**Tools & Resources**

Let’s Go! can help connect you with tools, resources, training opportunities, and partner organizations using the Guide to Success and specific to your geographic region (see pocket folder).

You can find materials and resources online at letsgo.org.

Need help finding something? Contact us at info@letsgo.org.

Stay Connected! Find, Like and Follow Us on Facebook!
Site Champion Checklist
Use this checklist to help ensure you stay on track with your Let’s Go! work.

**GETTING STARTED**

- **Identify a Champion**
  - Determine who at the site will be your lead for this work, typically this is the School Nutrition Director.

- **Build a Team/Join a School Nutrition Workgroup**
  - Gather support to take action in this partnership.

- **Assess your Environment & Create a Plan**
  - Use the Guide to Success.

- **Promote Messages**
  - Display Let’s Go! cafeteria signage
  - Build a Healthy Lunch poster
  - Food Bar Signs
  - Milk and Water posters

**ONGOING EACH YEAR**

- **Reconnect with Team/Workgroup**
  - Communicate with Team/Workgroup to reflect on previous year and develop or revise your Let’s Go! goals using the Guide to Success.
  - Communicate with District Wellness team to look for opportunities to collaborate and ensure district wellness policy is up-to-date.

- **Promote Messages**
  - Use Let’s Go! Welcome Packet Resources
  - Ensure Let’s Go! cafeteria signage are still hung up and in good condition.

- **Use Let’s Go! Program Tools and Resources**
  - Participate in professional development opportunities.
  - Invite Let’s Go! to your team meetings to provide ongoing support.

- **Ensure the Annual Survey is completed by Kitchen Managers each Spring**

- **Celebrate Success**
  - Gather pictures and videos of the accomplishments to share in newsletters, social media, letters to families, etc.
  - Share successes and outcomes with your team, leadership, staff, students and community for ongoing support.
  - Acknowledge individuals and groups (publicly where appropriate) for their contributions to success.