Nutrition Guidelines in Kansas Elementary Schools

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Childhood obesity is a nation-wide epidemic and is strongly linked to nutrition. Although the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) guidelines are designed to regulate students’ caloric intake and nutritional needs, ambiguous snack guidelines may be counteracting NSLP efforts. Our study assessed components of school lunches and snack guidelines in public elementary schools across Kansas. A data collection tool was developed to evaluate these items. Data was collected from public information on school websites. Schools were qualitatively evaluated and compared based on size and socioeconomic status as defined in the study. Results show that Kansas public elementary schools are following the NSLP guidelines, however snack guidelines vary greatly. There is no identifiable pattern in snack guidelines among the researched schools. A set of new national or state snack guidelines could help establish basic nutrition knowledge and encourage healthy eating in schools to combat the complex epidemic of childhood obesity.