Employee Wellness

Schools that support **Employee Wellness (EW)** recognize that healthy staff are essential when trying to build a healthy school environment. School employees serve as role models to students and can help reinforce nutrition and physical activity practices that students are learning. This analysis explores the extent to which policies include provisions to support educators' well-being, including stress management, substance abuse, and physical activity.

How is employee wellness addressed in state law?

- **Laws in 10 states address staff wellness programs.** Few states, however, provide coverage of specific health needs.

- **Mississippi, Nevada, and Rhode Island laws address providing physical activity opportunities for school staff**. In each case, opportunities for physical activity are included as part of a broader employee wellness program that also mentions nutrition and healthy eating choices.

- **Laws in Louisiana and Mississippi address providing stress management assistance to employees.** In Louisiana, this support is required specifically to deal with physical abuse by students. Mississippi's law addresses stress as part of its overall wellness initiative.

- **Laws in Mississippi, New Mexico, and Rhode Island address health assessments for employees.** These assessments go beyond requiring health assessments as a condition of employment; rather, they are for the benefit of the employee's personal health at various points throughout the school year.

Figure 1. Thirty-nine states do not cover employee wellness in state education policies.
Comprehensiveness of policies promoting employee wellness in schools, by state.

*This map shows states that have [◊] **comprehensive** (1), [Δ] **moderate** (2), [□] **low** (9), [○] and no (39) coverage of employee wellness topics in statutes and regulations governing education.*
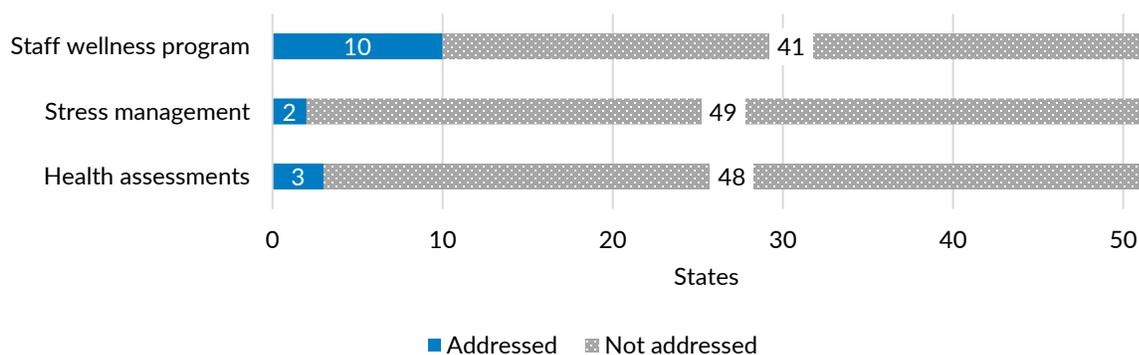
How comprehensively do states cover employee wellness?

- **Most states (39) do not address any employee wellness topics evaluated as part of this study.** States with low (range: 13 percent to 25 percent) and moderate (range: 38 percent to 63 percent) coverage of employee wellness provisions in their laws are most likely to include a staff wellness program, without listing individual elements of that program.

- **Mississippi is the only state with comprehensive coverage in this area (addressing 100 percent of topics).** Mississippi's law establishes a state-wide wellness program for all state employees who participate in the school employee health insurance plan.

Figure 2. Number of States Covering Selected Employee Wellness Topics

Child Trends, in partnership with The Institute of Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago and EMT Associates, Inc., examined the extent to which 11 healthy schools domains are addressed in state policy. These domains include the 10 components of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model: Health Education; Physical Education and Physical Activity; Nutrition Environment and Services; Health Services; Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services; Social and Emotional Climate; Physical Environment; Employee Wellness; Family Engagement; and Community Involvement. An additional domain, the WSCC References domain, addresses the extent to which state laws include explicit references to the WSCC model or similar language, such as the Center for Disease Control and Preventions' Coordinated School Health model.

This sub-brief provides an overview of how state policies cover the Employee Wellness domain. Sub-briefs covering the other domains as well as the compiled report can be found on the Child Trends website. Definitions of each of the eight topics are provided in the Appendix of the compiled report. Data from all topics are available through the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) State Policy Database on School Health.