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HEALTH SCIENCES

AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF FOOD-RELATED POLICIES AND PRACTICES (254 pp.)

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Since former Surgeon General David Satcher first identified childhood obesity as a threat to the nation's health in 2001, health professionals have investigated potential solutions. Venues in which to address this problem have also been explored.

The school setting was identified by the Institute of Medicine as a viable location in which to address the increasing child obesity epidemic. School professionals and personnel who are in contact with children for a large percentage of daily time were identified as potential change-agents. In addition, the School Wellness Policy Mandate of 2004 identified key players in the task of promoting wellness within the school setting. School personnel, namely school foodservice managers, were identified as primary players in the fight against this mounting health problem.

Interestingly, there is great variability in the professional preparation of school food service district managers/directors. Many professional organizations at this same time have been calling for professional preparation standards for the school food professional due to their important position and potential ability to influence the health of children.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of demographic characteristics and perceived self-efficacy on the development and implementation of

food-related policies and practices in schools among district public school food service directors in the state of Ohio ($N = 601$). Results indicate that certification of the district school food service director is associated most often with comprehensive policy and practice. Consistent with the literature, lack of funds was identified as the most common barrier to implementing comprehensive food policy and practice. It was also discovered that regardless of professional preparation, all subjects felt equally capable in their role. Higher levels of self-efficacy, however, were not associated with higher reporting of either food-related policy or practice.

Recommendations are to explore the nature of self-efficacy and professional performance in this population and to promote certification as a way to enhance comprehensive school health practices.