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News Release

Utah School District Pioneers Effort to Reduce Childhood Obesity

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Recently released 2016 CDC data confirms that adult obesity continues to be a serious problem in the U.S. For Utah, the data shows that the overall adult obesity rate increased 0.9 percent from 24.5% in 2015 to 25.4% in 2016. As the U.S. grapples with the obesity problem, one Utah school district has instituted a new policy aimed at increasing student physical activity and instilling healthful habits that will last a lifetime.

The obesity issue is not limited to adults. In Utah, 2015 data shows 22% of 8th graders are either overweight or obese. In an effort to address this issue, the Cache County School District implemented a new wellness policy that encourages students to engage in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Based on the CDC's [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program \(CSPAP\)](#) initiative, the wellness policy is designed to ensure all students are well-equipped for a lifetime of physical activity.

Other wellness policy highlights include preventing teachers from using recess as a disciplinary tool or as time for making up schoolwork, healthy vending machine snacks, non-food rewards and smart snacking.

Tera Olson, physical education specialist for Cache County School District, says, “The district believes our students’ well-being is critical to successful learning. We have been actively working to promote physical activity and healthy behaviors for students and that led us to approve our new district wellness policy last year, and with administrative support, we're moving forward to implement positive changes. Each school in our district

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has, or will be, assigning a wellness committee to craft a plan tailored for their school. We're excited for the positive impact this will have for our kids.”

To view the CDC obesity maps, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/prevalence-maps.html>. For more information on obesity prevention efforts in Utah, visit choosehealth.utah.gov.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.