

Support:

- Statewide policies that allow students to apply, carry, and store sunscreen and have sun-protective clothing for personal use in school and youth camps
- Students utilizing and possessing any Federal Food and Drug Administration-approved, over-the-counter sun protectant
- Providing shade structures for students to utilize during outdoor activities
- Education initiatives designed to encourage and promote smart, safe sunscreen use among students

Oppose:

- Barriers to allowing students to have adequate UV protection at school and youth camps, including physician prescription requirements for students to apply, carry, and store sunscreen for personal use
- Policies that would prevent sunscreen from being provided to students by school district officials unless otherwise opposed by a parent or guardian

Barriers to allowing students and youth camp participants to use sunscreen put them at significant risk of sun damage. In June 2012, two students from Tacoma, Washington made national headlines when it was reported that they were denied the use of sunscreen during an all-day field day activity and were severely sunburned.¹ Currently, 23 states have not taken a position on school sunscreen use policies, leaving it to a local district to decide whether a student can have or use sunscreen. According to a 2016 study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), half of school districts across the country neither require nor recommend policy which allows students to apply sunscreen while at school.²

Additionally, sunscreen is classified by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as an over-the-counter drug product.³ Schools across the country have implemented broad 'medication bans' which require students to have a note or prescription from a physician in order to have over-the-counter drug products, including sunscreen, at school. The CDC believes that school policies that prohibit student possession of sunscreen and sun-protective clothing can create barriers to the use of important sun protection.⁴ Removing or banning products that have shown over the course of time to be safe and effective against sunburn puts children at risk during everyday school activities. ASDSA believes that children at school or day camp should have access to any FDA-approved over-the-counter sunscreen.

Studies in Australia, which has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world,⁵ have shown

¹ Painter K. Sunscreen Forbidden at Schools and Camps. USA Today 26 June 2012 Retrieved 13 Aug 2013. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/health/story/2012-06-27/sunscreen-policies/55877080/1>

² School Health Policies and Practices Study (SHPPS) 2016 ... (n.d.). Retrieved December 27, 2017, from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/shpps/pdf/shpps-results_2016.pdf.

³ 21CFR352. Retrieved January 8, 2020. ecfr.gov.

⁴ Skin Cancer Prevention Progress Report 2017. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Dept. of Health and Human Services.

⁵ SunSmart. *Skin cancer*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 16, 2024, from <https://www.sunsmart.com.au/skin-cancer>

that sun-protective clothing, including hats,⁶ are one of the best barriers between skin and the sun. An Australian study of school-sun protection policies found that a comprehensive sun-protection policy, which includes the allowance and promotion of both sunscreen and sun-protective clothing, is an essential part of developing sun-safe behaviors in school communities.⁷

The use of sunscreen at a young age is a critical and necessary component of skin cancer prevention. A study done by the CDC reports that only 10 percent of students reported regular or nearly regular use of sunscreen during prolonged periods of regular sun exposure.⁸ Another study revealed more than 40 percent of an individual's lifetime UV exposure a person occurs within the first 20 years of life.⁹ More than 7.9 million high school students participated in at least one sport in 2014-15, mostly outdoors.¹⁰

A person's risk for melanoma increases greatly if he or she has had multiple sunburns, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.^{11, 12} Melanoma accounts for 4 percent of all pediatric cancers in children between the ages of 15 and 19,¹³ and is the most common form of diagnosed cancer in persons between the ages of 24 and 29.¹⁴

Regular sunscreen use helps reduce overall lifetime skin cancer rates. An Australian study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* revealed that the regular use of sunscreen can significantly reduce an individual's risk of being diagnosed by skin cancer. Some subjects were provided with free sunscreen and were encouraged to apply during outdoor activities, while other subjects were not, so that researchers could determine whether regular application of sunscreen can reduce the risk of skin cancer. Over a fifteen year period, researchers found that individuals who regularly used sunscreen were 50 percent less likely to be diagnosed with melanoma, and 75 percent less likely to be diagnosed with non-melanoma skin cancer.¹⁵

The American Medical Association supports the availability of sunscreen for school children. In June 2013, the American Medical Association adopted policy to support the exemption of sunscreen from over-the-counter medication possession bans in schools and encourage all schools to allow students to bring and possess sunscreen at school without restriction and without requiring physician authorization.

*Approved by the ASDSA Board of Directors: March 2017
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⁶ Gies P, Javorniczky J, Roy C, Henderson S. Measurements of the UVR protection provided by hats used at school. *Photochem Photobiol* 2006 May;82(3):750-4.

⁷ Turner D et. al; School sun-protection policies—does being SunSmart make a difference?. *Health Educ Res* 2014; 29 (3): 367-377. doi: 10.1093/her/cyu010

⁸ Kann, L.; et.al; Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance - United States, 2013. *MMWR* 2014;63(No.SS-41).

⁹ Thomas, N., et.al.; Number of Nevi and Early-Life Ambient UV Exposure Are Associated with BRAF-Mutant Melanoma. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 2007; 16: 991-997

¹⁰ National Federation of State High School Associations. 2018-19 High School Athletics Participation Survey. Retrieved from https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020412/2018-19_participation_survey.pdf.

¹¹ The Skin Cancer Foundation. *Facts About Sunburn and Skin Cancer*.

<http://www.skincancer.org/prevention/sunburn/facts-about-sunburn-and-skin-cancer>

¹² Wu, S., Han, J., Laden, F., & Qureshi, A. A. (2014, June 01). Long-term Ultraviolet Flux, Other Potential Risk Factors, and Skin Cancer Risk: A Cohort Study. Retrieved June 29, 2017, from

<http://cebp.aacrjournals.org/content/23/6/1080>

¹³ *Cancer Facts and Figures 2024*. American Cancer Society. <https://www.cancer.org/research/cancer-facts-statistics/all-cancer-facts-figures/cancer-facts-figures-2019.html>. Accessed February 16, 2024.

¹⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁵ Green, A., et.al.; Reduced Melanoma After Regular Sunscreen Use: Randomized Trial Follow-Up *J Clin Oncol* 2011 Jan. 29:257-263.

Related AMA Policy:

H-440.841 Permitting Sunscreen in Schools

1. Our AMA supports the exemption of sunscreen from over-the-counter medication possession bans in schools and encourages all schools to allow students to bring and possess sunscreen at school without restriction and without requiring physician authorization.

2. Our AMA will work with state and specialty medical societies and patient advocacy groups to provide advocacy resources and model legislation for use in state advocacy campaigns seeking the removal of sunscreen-related bans at schools and summer camp programs.

(Res. 403, A-13; Appended: Res. 422, A-16)