

GREEN CLEANING IN SCHOOLS

OVERVIEW OF STATE LAWS

Environmental Law Institute

Part of the ELI Series

[Topics in School
Environmental Health:
Overview of State Laws](#)

Why is this Issue Important for School Environmental Health?

Cleaning products are important for maintaining a sanitary environment in schools. chemicals in cleaning products may be harmful to the environment inside and outside schools and may impact the health of students, maintenance workers, and other school staff. "Green cleaning" addresses these risks by: selecting products that reduce impacts on health and the environment; applying these products properly; and implementing maintenance practices that minimize exposure to cleaning products. A wide variety of green cleaning products are now available, and many states and school districts have begun to adopt green cleaning programs and practices. The first state to do so, New York, reviewed its early program experience and found that green cleaning products cost the same or less, and were as effective, as traditional cleaning products.

For more information on U.S. EPA and New York state green cleaning programs, see <http://www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/cleaning.htm> and <https://greencleaning.ny.gov/policies.asp>.

What Types of State Policies are Included in this Overview?

This Overview includes state laws and regulations that require use of green cleaning products by schools or that direct state agencies to take action to facilitate/encourage green cleaning in schools, though it does not necessarily include all such policies. State agency guidance documents and other materials are not included in the absence of a related law or regulation addressing green cleaning directly. [For additional information on the laws and regulations listed below, see ELI's [policy brief](#) on green cleaning in schools.]

Most of the state laws and regulations described below require schools to use green cleaning products, while a small number recommend or facilitate their use. Most, but not all, of the laws that require green cleaning products also direct schools to use only products/product certifications that have been approved by the state or to follow guidance established by the state pursuant to the law. Only a small number of states include other requirements, such as use of green cleaning practices, training for school maintenance staff, or reporting on green cleaning activities.

States covered in the summary chart below: **CT, DC, HI, IL, IA, ME, MD, MS, MO, MT, NV, NY, VT**

STATE & CITATION	GREEN CLEANING SUMMARY OF LAW/REGULATION	LAW REQUIRES SCHOOLS TO USE GC PRODUCTS?
CONNECTICUT Ct. Gen. Stat. §§ 10-231g, 10-220	Connecticut law requires local and regional boards of education to adopt green cleaning programs for all of their school buildings and facilities. The law prohibits the use of cleaning products in schools unless the products meet national or international certification standards approved by the Department of Administrative Services. The department has issued an environmentally-preferable purchasing policy approving products certified through the Green Seal or EcoLogo programs. The law requires school boards to report to the state on actions taken to implement the programs and to provide information about their programs to the school community, including a notification that school staff and others are prohibited from bringing to school “any consumer product that is intended to clean, deodorize, sanitize or disinfect.”	YES
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA D.C. Code § 38-825.01	District of Columbia law requires that all public schools in the District of Columbia use environmentally-friendly cleaning products.	YES
HAWAII Hi. Rev. Stat. §§302A-1509, 321-26.5	Hawaii law directs the Department of Health to require all public schools to give first preference, where feasible, to the purchase and use of environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products that have been certified through the Green Seal program. The requirement applies to several product categories listed in the law and to other categories that may be identified by the Department of Health. A related law directs the Department to maintain a list of Green Seal-certified products.	YES (first preference)
ILLINOIS Il. Comp. Stat., Ch. 105, §§ 140/1--99	Illinois law requires elementary and secondary schools with 50 or more students to establish a green cleaning policy and to exclusively purchase and use environmentally-sensitive cleaning products, pursuant to guidelines and specifications established by the state. An exception is provided if adopting a policy would result in increased cleaning costs to a school – provided the school gives annual written notice to the state that adopting a policy would not be economically feasible. The state developed guidelines in 2008 that require, for several products categories, the purchase and use of products that meet the criteria of the Green Seal or EcoLogo programs or (for chemicals) the EPA Design for the Environment Formulator program. Schools may also seek alternative qualification for products not already certified by submitting independent documentation that the products meet these standards. The guidelines also describe voluntary green cleaning practices that schools can adopt.	YES
IOWA Ia. Code § 8A.318	Iowa law requires school districts to purchase only cleaning and maintenance products identified by the state Department of Administrative Services or products that meet nationally-recognized standards. A school district may opt out of compliance with this requirement upon the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the board of directors of the school district. As directed by the law, the Department has posted information on its web site regarding environmentally-preferable cleaning and maintenance products,	YES

	including links to agencies and organizations that offer product certification or labeling programs.	
MAINE Me. Resolves ch. 32, S.P. 32 - L.D. 88	Maine legislation requires the Department of Education, in consultation with other agencies, to compile and distribute to schools annually recommendations for green cleaning practices, as well as a list of products that have been certified by a third-party, independent agency such as Green Seal, or that have been listed by the state Department of Administrative and Financial Services. The legislation also requires the state to recognize school green cleaning programs by maintaining and making publicly available a list of school administrative units that have committed to using cleaning products and disinfectants that are included in lists developed by the state.	NO
MARYLAND Md. Educ. Code § 5-112(e)	Maryland law requires county boards of education to procure green cleaning supplies for use in schools for several product categories listed in the law. Each board must adopt written policies that: require the use of green product cleaning supplies; establish purchasing guidelines that meet third-party certification standards; establish green cleaning practices; and require staff training. The boards must develop specifications that allow multiple avenues for certification of green cleaning supplies, including Green Seal, Green Label, Environmental Choice, Terra Choice, EcoLogo, or other nationally recognized, independent, third-party entity. An exception to these requirements is provided if procuring green product cleaning supplies is not practicable or economically feasible, and the law requires the school board to give annual written notice of this determination to the state Department of Education.	YES
MISSISSIPPI Ms. Code § 37-11-71	Under Mississippi law, the state Department of Education must require each public school district to require their local school health councils to adopt and support the implementation of a local school wellness policy that minimizes children's exposure to dust, gases, fumes and other pollutants that can aggravate asthma. The wellness policy must, among other things, "minimize the use of hazardous substances such as, but not limited to, chemical cleaning products and pesticides in and around school buildings during the hours that children are present at school."	NO
MISSOURI Mo. Rev. Stat. § 161.365	Missouri law requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish and disseminate to all school districts guidelines and specifications for green cleaning programs. School districts must, in turn, disseminate the guidelines to every school in the district. The voluntary guidelines established by the department include recommendations for green cleaning products and practices and encourage school districts to implement the recommendations. The guidelines reference the Green Seal and EcoLogo product certification programs, as well as the EPA Design for the Environment Formulator program (for chemicals), and describe considerations for purchasing products not covered by these programs.	NO
MONTANA Mont. Admin. Rule § 37.111.841	Montana school health rules incorporate certain cleaning and maintenance requirements, including a ban on the use of deodorizers and odor-masking agents, and also state that: "As current non-green cleaning supplies are depleted it is recommended that they are replaced with cleaning products that are 'Green Products.'"	NO

<p>NEVADA Nv. Rev. Stat. § 386.4195</p>	<p>Nevada law requires public schools to use only environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products for all floor surfaces. If a school district determines that the costs of complying with the requirement are “unreasonable and would place an undue burden on the efficient operation” of the district or a school, the district may purchase and use a floor cleaning product that is not environmentally sensitive. In order to do so, the district must first post notice of the product to be used on the district’s web site.</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>NEW YORK 16 N.Y. Educ. Code § 409-i</p>	<p>New York law requires schools to identify and procure environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products. Schools are required to follow guidelines, specifications, and sample product lists developed by the state. The state Office of General Services has developed guidelines that require cleaning products in several categories to be certified by Green Seal or EcoLogo, or to meet self-attestation requirements described in the guidelines. The OGS Guidelines also promote green cleaning best practices such as use of equipment and staff training.</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>VERMONT 18 Vt. Stat. §§ 1781-1783</p>	<p>Vermont law requires those who provide cleaning products or contracted cleaning services to schools to provide and use only environmentally-preferable cleaning products that are either used by the state under state contract or certified by an independent, nationally-recognized organization that meets criteria established in the law. Under the law, air fresheners sold or distributed to schools or used by contracted cleaning services also must be certified as environmentally preferable. The law requires distributors and manufacturers to provide green cleaning training to school districts at no cost.</p>	<p>YES</p>