

# Healthy Out-of-School Time Wellness Policy Implementation Guide for Parks and Recreation Agencies

IMPLEMENTATION  
EXAMPLES &  
STORIES

ALLIANCE FOR A  
HEALTHIER  
GENERATION

The logo for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, featuring three stylized human figures in white, representing a family or community.

NRPA  
National Recreation  
and Park Association

The logo for the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), featuring a stylized tree icon to the left of the text.



## Healthy Out-of-School Time Wellness Policy Guide

Your agency is working to make your afterschool and summer program healthier for youth, staff and families. But what happens when there is staff turnover? What happens when the staff person championing wellness efforts at your afterschool or summer program changes jobs? What happens when only some of your agency staff understand the importance of health and wellness improvements?

The answer: Some amazing progress can be lost.

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation is dedicated to ensuring that the healthy improvements made in afterschool and summer programs are *sustainable improvements*. That's why the Alliance helps youth-serving organizations create their own wellness policy .

A wellness policy is a written document made up of several policies and language that outline an agency's dedication to children's health and wellness. Some programs use policies to define the types of foods that can or can't be consumed on premises, while others may set the requirement for minimum number of physical activity minutes during program hours. Many policies also focus on staff wellness to emphasize healthy role-modeling.

The purpose of this guide is to provide your agency with real-life examples, best practices and steps to help you implement a wellness policy and create sustainable changes at your site.

### Customizing your Wellness Policy

Culture change takes time. Consider how you can work with your leadership to identify the specific wellness goals that you want to prioritize and make into a wellness policy. The Healthy Out-of-School Time Model wellness policy (see end of guide) contains many ideas and suggestions you can use to develop and customize your agency's wellness policy . You may want to utilize the Alliance's [Healthy Out-of-School Time Assessment](#) to assist you in identifying which healthy eating or physical activity standards you need a formal policy to help implement. You may find that you're already achieving a standard, but are lacking a formal policy to ensure consistent implementation across your organization. Customization based on your agency's strengths and strategic goals will ensure the strongest wellness policy . See below for one agency's experience working with the Alliance's tools to customize their own wellness policy.

*“One of the greatest benefits of the Healthy Out-of-School Time Assessment is the ability to take the information provided in the assessment, much of which we were currently doing within our program, and formalize it through program policy and staff guidelines. At the time of the assessment, we were meeting many of the standards through practice but not policy. This assessment acted as a guide for us to review our current program policies and staff manual and update for expected standards to be met. In addition, the things that we were not meeting were easily met through program improvements. Those that are still not met are on our Action Item list to be addressed in the future.”*

*- City of Buckeye Parks and Recreation, AZ*

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Notice in the above example how the City of Buckeye Parks and Recreation used this time to review their current program policies and staff manual and made updates to ensure wellness standards were formalized within current documents that are familiar to and used by staff.

### Policy Integration

As you look to implement a wellness policy at your agency, it is important to consider ways to integrate consistent messaging into other areas of organizational policy. Although having a strong wellness policy that can stand on its own is important, it will also be vital to the implementation of the policies if the language is consistent and supportive in other areas of your organizational materials. Do you have documents or manuals that outline staff responsibilities, core competencies or agency mission and values? Do you have staff onboarding materials and training documents that outline your agency's culture? See below for an example of integrating wellness language into other areas of organizational policy.

#### EXAMPLE 1

*PURPOSE: To provide a safe, supervised environment for school-aged children.*

*PHILOSOPHY: The focus of the City of Buckeye (AZ) Kid's BASE Program is the enhancement of self worth and increased knowledge of each participant through the provision of quality supervision and effective programming. This is to be accomplished through the implementation of activities that are basic to personal development, physical wellness, socialization, and cultural awareness in a relaxed and enjoyable environment, made possible through qualified and enthusiastic staff, a cooperative school system, and a community interested in and responsive to the needs of its youth.*

#### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

1. *Create a sense of usefulness through:*
  - a. *Personal Development.*
    1. *children are made responsible for their behavior*
    2. *children participate in activities that require cooperation*
    3. *children learn problem solving techniques through role playing*
    4. *children participate in recreational activities*
  - b. *Physical Wellness.*
    1. *children participate in non-competitive and cooperative play*
    2. *children participate in "fitness" activities*
    3. *children participate in safety awareness programs*
  - c. *Cultural Awareness.*
    1. *children participate in instructional classes*
    2. *children participate in making a variety of art projects*
    3. *children are introduced to various media through speakers and demonstrations*

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### EXAMPLE 2

*Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation (GA) will:*

- 1. Offer a variety of planned physical activities for persons of all ages and abilities.*
- 2. Give all park and facility users access to healthy food and beverage options.*
- 3. Partner with local community members, organizations and businesses to promote healthy habits and programs to residents and staff of Gwinnett County.*
- 4. Provide day camps with healthy and safe environments for participants.*
- 5. Deliver safe and healthy environments for all park and facility users to exercise, socialize and play.*
- 6. Ensure that staff operates in safe and healthy workplace environments.*
- 7. Designate smoke-free “Areas of Play” to keep all park and facility users and staff safe and healthy.*

### Wellness Policy Introduction

Including a clear introduction to your agency’s wellness policy will provide relevant context to the reader. Additionally, outlining how this wellness policy connects to the [National Recreation and Parks Association’s Commit to Health](#) campaign, the [National AfterSchool Association Standards for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity](#), and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s best practices, sets the tone for the reader that this work is legitimate, part of something bigger and backed by strong leadership. Use the introductory section as an opportunity to educate the reader and build their support for this work. Staff and families will become familiar with the rationale behind your wellness policy and be able to speak to your agency’s role in health and wellness throughout the community. See below for examples from the field:

### EXAMPLE 1

*“The City of Bakersfield has adopted the following National Recreation and Park Association’s Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Standards for our afterschool and summer programs. The Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards were created by a national coalition of out-of-school time leaders to create evidence-based, practical values that foster the best possible nutrition and physical activity outcomes for children in grades K-12 attending out-of-school time programs.” – City of Bakersfield Parks and Recreation, CA*

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### EXAMPLE 2

*“Staff and participants are required to support and implement the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards set forth by the National Recreation and Park Association that have been adopted by the City of Buckeye. Each site’s staff is required to collaborate with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation in implementing the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards. Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards are evidence-based, practical values that foster the best possible nutrition and physical activity outcomes for children in grades K-12 attending out-of-school time programs. We have partnered with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to implement healthy eating, physical activity and youth engagement at our sites. Each site will provide technical assistance, planning and trainings for all staff. Sites are committed to the following Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards and practices”- City of Buckeye Parks and Recreation, AZ*

### EXAMPLE 3

*“According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a healthy community is one that continuously creates and improves both its physical and social environments, helping people to support one another in aspects of daily life and to develop to their fullest potential. Park and Recreation Departments are at the center of healthy places designed and built to improve the quality of life for all people who live, work, learn, and play within their borders—where every person is free to make choices amid a variety of healthy, available, accessible, and affordable options. To show our commitment to community well-being and public health, The Florida Recreation and Park Association (FRPA) created the State of Health and Wellness Pledge. In working to meet the following standards, Park and Recreation agencies can take the lead in moving their community toward a better tomorrow”- Florida Recreation and Park Association*

### **Staff Training and Rollout**

Although the specific language used in your wellness policy is vitally important, the implementation and rollout of the policy is equally as significant. You will need to ensure that all levels of your agency’s leadership and staff are made aware of the new wellness policy and that they understand the implications of such policies. Here are a some ways to ensure an effective wellness policy rollout:

- Include strong rationale in all onboarding and staff training materials and provide time for discussion among staff.
- Consider sharing this wellness policy to community boards or committees outside of your department. Local leadership and government officials are important allies for this work.
- Stay positive as you get started,. Expect to receive some push back, but remember to stay focused on the long-term vision of your policy and the importance of your agency’s leadership role in your community’s health and wellness movement.

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- Consider including the rationale and policy details in your hiring process, staff onboarding, staff annual reviews and ongoing staff communications like newsletters or email blasts.

See below for three agencies' methods for implementing their wellness policy.

### EXAMPLE 1

*“Our staff thought that the ban on movies would be difficult for the children, however that was not the case. I think the staff missed it way more than the children! We received very few comments from the children that they even noticed we had banned movies. We have already been implementing all of the other healthy eating and physical activity standards, so continuing to implement them posed no issues.” –City of Bakersfield Parks and Recreation, CA*

### EXAMPLE 2

*“During our summer program, we have a policy that staff cannot eat or drink unhealthy items in front of the kids. We implemented this policy because if we want our children to eat healthy and be more aware of what they consume, it must start with the adults that are working with them. Staff must practice what they are teaching.” – City of Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation, IN*

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### EXAMPLE 3

*“Standard: Park and Recreation agency receives up to date training on safe, physical activity trends in play.*

- 1. Staff will receive a minimum of 8 contact hours annually for professional development on effective practices and strategies for planning all-inclusive physical activity.*
- 2. Agency will create a staff policy to promote and encourage a physically active lifestyle.*

*Standard: Park and Recreation Agency is known for encouraging and teaching healthy eating habits.*

- 1. Staff receive training on the role of healthy eating, physical activity, and social supports for health behaviors minimally once per year.*
- 2. Evidence-based nutrition education is available to parents and youth.*
- 3. Provide nutrition classes and program at little or no cost to community.*

*On \_\_\_\_\_ in the City/County of \_\_\_\_\_, the undersigned pledges to positively impact Community health through the implementation of the above standards”*

*- Florida Recreation and Park Association, State of Health and Wellness Pledge*

Give staff a voice in the development of your policies. This will lead to a smoother implementation. Here is a process you can follow to help ensure quality implementation of your wellness policy:

1. Convene a meeting or set of meetings for staff that represent multiple levels of responsibility in your organization. These individuals will become your Wellness Team. The person in your organization who is taking the lead on this work will facilitate the meeting and explain why your organization is developing a wellness policy. Remember, the decision to implement a wellness policy may not be up for discussion, but what the policies will entail and look like can be shaped by staff voice. This representation is crucial for staff buy-in and effective implementation.
  - a. For multi-site organizations, Wellness Team members may include your executive director, regional program director, site directors, and select group leaders.
  - b. For single-site organizations, Wellness Team members may include your program director, part-time staff, and program volunteers.
  - c. Consider adding a youth representative at each site to help create buy-in and a greater level of engagement with the youth you serve.
2. Once the Wellness Team has met and staff has had a chance to voice their ideas, you can now create the wellness policy. Allow Wellness Team members to go over the draft of the policy to ask questions and ensure open communication.
3. After feedback has been received, complete a final draft of the wellness policy that will be adopted and shared with the organization as a whole.
4. Set up training sessions for all staff who will be impacted by this policy. Communicate not only what the policy is, but the “why” and “how” of the policy. These sessions will be the Wellness Team’s time to talk about why the policy is being adopted and to provide training on how sites will implement the policy. For example, if a policy was created that states all sites will offer 30 minutes of physical activity daily, the training should include ideas on different physical activity games and how to build this time into their schedules while still balancing all the other things they need to get done during program time.

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5. Speak with the youth and families at your site about the wellness policy and any changes that will be coming. Get their thoughts on the best ways to implement the changes at the site.
6. Develop a communication document for parents, letting them know of the changes and the new policy and how this will benefit their children.
7. Ensure implementation. Solicit regular feedback from staff and continue to hold trainings to support staff in implementing policies at their sites. Some staff may need more assistance and guidance than others.

Recognize that implementing change is a process and may take more time than expected, but stick with it!

### Final Thoughts

Wellness Policies may seem like a daunting task for an agency to implement, but they are essential resources.. They are lasting documentation of your change efforts and important guidelines that make this work clear, measurable, and official. Wellness Policies come in many shapes and sizes depending on the scope of your agency and should be unique to your community.

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### THE ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION'S HEALTH OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME MODEL WELLNESS POLICY FOR HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

[*The Out-of-School Time Organization*] (Hereto referred to as the Organization) is committed to the optimal development of every student. The Organization believes that for youth to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental, and social success, we need to create positive, safe, and health-promoting out of school time environments throughout the year. The following Wellness Policy is based on the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) Commit to Health campaign—an initiative that supports the national implementation of Healthy Eating, Physical Activity (Healthy Eating and Physical Activity) standards in park and recreation sites across the country.

The Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards were created by a national coalition of out-of-school time leaders to create evidence-based, practical values that foster the best possible nutrition and physical activity outcomes for children in grades K-12 attending out-of-school time programs. The Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards have been adopted by many organizations, including the NRPA, the National Afterschool Association, and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

This policy outlines the Organization's approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students/youth to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in out-of-school time settings. This policy establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- Youth participating in our out of school time programs have access to healthy foods throughout their time with us—both through reimbursable snack programs and other foods served or sold available throughout the Organization's campus—in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards;
- Youth receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors;
- Youth have opportunities to be physically active after school;
- Site staff, community partners and stakeholders engage in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote youth wellness;
- Out-of-School Time staff are encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors;
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of the Organization in creating continuity between schools and out-of-school time settings for youth and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits; and
- The Organization establishes and maintains an infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about, and monitoring of the policy and its established goals and objectives.

This policy applies to all youth, staff, and sites that participate with the Organization's programs.

#### 1. **HEALTHY EATING STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES**

##### 1.A. **Snacks and Meals**

In support of the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Out-of-School Time Initiative](#), our organization serves foods and beverage in amounts and types that promote lifelong health and help prevent chronic disease. To support this, our organization ensures that our snack and meal program:

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- Prohibits serving foods with artificial trans fats
- Serves only fruit that is fresh, canned or frozen in water, 100% juice, extra light or light syrup or dried with no added sweeteners
- Serves only vegetables that are fresh, canned or frozen with no added ingredients except water, or dried with no added ingredients
- Serves a fruit or vegetable at every snack and/or meal
- Serves only grain products that are whole grain-rich
- Serves only dairy products (not including milk) that are non-fat or reduced fat
- Serves only protein foods (not including nuts and seeds) that are lean meat, skinless poultry, seafood, beans/legumes or eggs
- Serves only nuts or seeds with no added ingredients
- Serves only packaged snacks that meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards (such as granola bars, baked chips, etc.)
- Serves only frozen desserts that meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards (such as frozen fruit bars, ice cream)
- Provides plain potable water at all times at no cost to youth and staff
- Serves only plain low-fat milk, or plain or flavored non-fat milk, limited to 8 fluid ounces per day for elementary school students/youth and 12 fluid ounces per day for middle and high school students/youth
- Serves only 100% fruit or vegetable juice with no added sweeteners, or 100% juice diluted with water with no added sweeteners, limited to 8 fluid ounces per day for elementary school students/youth and 12 fluid ounces per day for middle and high school students/youth
- Prohibits serving full-calorie sodas, sports drinks or juice drinks (not including 100% juice)
- Prohibits serving diet soda, low-calorie sports drinks, or other low calorie beverages for elementary and middle school students/youth, and/or only allows these beverages for high school students/youth
- Serves only non-caffeinated beverages

### 1.B. Staff Training

Our staff will regularly participate in learning about healthy eating grounded in effective training models using content that is evidence-based. Training should be comprehensive (covers multiple topics), evidence-based (based on credible research), does not support a particular industry or food sector agenda and is delivered by qualified personnel. At least 2 staff members will be trained at a time.

Staff members who are charged with the responsibility for food service (to develop or serve a healthy menu) will receive training at least once a year. New staff members will be quickly oriented to healthy menu development (if scheduled training is at least a month away).

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All staff members are trained at least once a year and coached throughout the year on the role that healthy eating, physical activity and social supports collectively play to support healthy behaviors amongst youth.

### 1.C. Nutrition Education

[The Organization] aims to teach, model, encourage, and support healthy eating by youth. Our program will offer evidence-based nutrition education to youth that:

- Does not support a particular industry or food sector agenda
- Is delivered by credentialed health or nutrition educators (i.e., have CHES- Certified Health Education Specialist , RD- Registered Dietitian, LD- Licensed Dietitian) or postsecondary degree in appropriate field) or program staff that have been trained by credentialed health or nutrition educators.

In addition, our program's Nutrition Education materials are made available to families through pamphlets, newsletters, email blasts or other means.

### 1.D. Celebrations and Rewards

Foods and beverages will not be used as reward or punishment. The Organization will provide directors and site staff with a [list of alternative ways to reward children](#).

All events and celebrations that serve or sell foods and beverages will meet the [USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards](#). The Organization will provide a list of healthy party ideas to parents and site staff, including nonfood celebration ideas. Healthy party ideas from the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#) and from the [USDA](#).

### 1.E. Fundraising

Fundraisers will serve or sell foods and beverages that align with the [USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards](#) or rely on non-food items.

### 1.F. Social Support

Our Organization and staff create a social environment (including positive relationships among staff, youth, families and community) that encourages children to enjoy healthy foods. This includes:

- Youth participating in food and beverage selection, distribution, preparation and/or clean-up
- Food and beverages served or sold at family/community events meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards
- Families receive guidelines about food and beverages that may be brought into the program by the family members or youth
- Our program has a process in place for discussing inappropriate food and beverage choices with families
- Our program's healthy eating practices are shared and discussed during parent/family/community meetings
- Our program develops family advisory groups and/or community network groups to support healthy eating in the community and at home

### 1.G. Staff Modeling

Staff will model healthy eating for participants. To support this, our program will ensure:

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- When available and appropriate, staff sit and eat daily program snack or meal with youth
- Staff discuss the health benefits of snack or meal components with youth and have a process in place for discussing inappropriate food choices with youth
- Staff do not bring in/consume personal food or beverages in front of youth other than items that would not appear on the program's menu

### 1.H. Organizational Support

Our Organization supports healthy eating through management and budgeting practices. This includes:

- Budgeting for food costs so that our food service is aligned with the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards
- Accessing federal nutrition programs that assist with providing healthy snacks and meals to participants (i.e. National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).
- Not using our food budget for food based crafts (e.g. dried pasta for craft projects)
- Leadership support for healthy eating through coaching, mentoring and monitoring menu quality
- Foods served at staff meetings meet the [USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards](#).
- Staff at all levels of the Organization model healthy eating on the job

#### 1.H.a Community Partnerships

The Organization will [*insert as appropriate to current efforts: develop, enhance, or continue*] relationships with community partners (i.e. hospitals, universities/colleges, local businesses, etc.) in support of this policy's implementation. Existing and new community partnerships and sponsorships will be evaluated to ensure that they are consistent with the wellness policy and its goals.

#### 1.H.b Community Health Promotion and Engagement

The Organization will promote to parents/caregivers, families, and the general community the benefits of and approaches for healthy eating and physical activity throughout the year. Families will be informed and invited to participate in the Organization's activities and events focused on health and will receive information about health promotion efforts.

As described in the "Community Involvement, Outreach, and Communications" subsection, the Organization will use electronic mechanisms (such as email or displaying notices on the Organization's website), as well as non-electronic mechanisms, (such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents), to ensure that all families are actively notified of opportunities to participate in Organization-sponsored activities and receive information about health promotion efforts.

## 2. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES

### 2.A. Physical Activity

The Organization offers opportunities for students/youth to participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity, through a variety of methods. The Organization will encourage youth to be physically active in Out-of-School Time settings by providing appropriate and reasonable options such as clubs, physical activity in afterschool, intramurals, or varsity sports, etc.

The Organization will dedicate at least 20% or at least 30 minutes of morning or afterschool program time to physical activity (60 minutes for a full day program) with at least 50% of this time dedicated to youth

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being moderately to vigorously active.

### 2.B. Staff Training

Our staff will participate in learning about physical activity through effective training models with content that is evidence-based. Annual training should provide a minimum of 8 contact hours of professional development on effective practices and strategies for including physical activity that supports the [USDHHS Physical Activity Guidelines](#).

Staff are trained not to withhold opportunities for physical activity and are trained to use appropriate alternate strategies as consequences for negative or undesirable behaviors.

### 2.C. Social Support

Our Organization and staff create a social environment (including positive relationships among staff, youth, families and community) that encourages children to be physically active. This includes:

- Staff led and participate in active play (e.g. games and activities).
- Staff do not withhold or use physical activity as a punishment.
- Youth participate in physical activity selection, Organization and leadership.
- Educational materials about physical activity are made available to parents/families, parent/family/community events incorporate physical activity and physical activity standards and practices are shared and discussed during parent/family/community meetings.
- Developing a family advisory group and/or community network groups that support physical activity in the community and at home.

### 2.D. Staff Modeling

Staff will model healthy physical activity behaviors by participating in physical activities and games alongside youth.

### 2.E. Organizational Support

Our Organization supports physical activity through management and budgeting practices by providing high quality physical activity experiences.

- Leadership supports physical activity improvements through coaching, mentoring and monitoring progress and participation in ongoing self-evaluation and program improvement strategies for physical activity programming.
- Organization promotes and encourages a physically active lifestyle among staff and ensures the liability and risk management policies enable staff to participate in physical activity with youth.

### 2.F. Environmental Support

Our Organization's physical environment supports physical activity by providing developmentally, age-appropriate equipment for games, sports and activities, adequate indoor and outdoor facilities for physical activity.

Our Organization provides adequate access to indoor and outdoor facilities through formal or informal shared use agreements with Healthy Out-of-School Time facilities

Our Organization provides positive messages about safe and developmentally appropriate physical activity through posters, pictures and books.