



Wellness Policy

**Youth Homes
550 N. California Street
Missoula, Montana 59802**

Preamble

Youth Homes recognizes that good nutrition and regular physical activity affect the health and well-being of all youth. Furthermore, research suggests that there is a positive correlation between a youth's health and well-being and his/her/their ability to learn. Moreover, RCCIs can play an important role in the developmental process by which youth establish their health and nutrition habits by providing nutritious meals and snacks through the school meal programs, supporting the development of good eating habits and promoting increased physical activity.

Youth Homes is committed to creating an environment that promotes and protects the overall well-being of all youth and staff. The guidelines listed below encourage a comprehensive wellness approach that is sensitive to both individual and community needs.

1. Wellness Policy Leadership

- a. The Youth Homes Food Service Director, Declan Lawson, shall ensure overall compliance with the wellness policy

Youth Homes will review and consider evidence-based strategies and techniques in establishing goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity and other RCCI-based activities that promote youth wellness to include, at a minimum, a review of Smarter Lunchroom tools and techniques.

2. Nutrition Promotion

- a. At a minimum, utilize Smarter Lunchroom tools and strategies to promote and reinforce healthy eating in the school environment, ensuring that messages are clear and consistent.
- b. Increase youth awareness of useful nutrition information from brochures, worksheets, handouts and digital content by 15-20%

3. Nutrition Education

- a. Youth receive nutrition education that is interactive and teaches skills they need to adopt age-appropriate healthy eating behaviors. Activities and youth participation are provided in the home. Planning a balanced meal and helping to cook the meal is an example of nutrition education activities.
- b. The staff responsible for nutrition education will be adequately prepared and participate regularly in professional development activities to effectively deliver an accurate nutrition education program as planned. Preparation and professional development activities will provide basic knowledge of nutrition combined with skill practice in program-specific activities and instructional techniques and strategies designed to promote healthy eating habits.

4. Physical Activity

- a. Youth will have an increase in both the number and variety of physical activity opportunities offered to them.
- b. Staff will be encouraged to participate in 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., brisk walking, jogging, swimming) every week. Staff will be informed of the opportunity to participate in physical activity in afterschool programs and community events.
- c. As applicable, Youth Homes will take advantage of nearby facilities to provide expanded physical activity opportunities for students, families, and staff.

5. Other RCCI-Based Activities

- a. Youth Homes will integrate wellness activities across the entire RCCI setting. These initiatives will include nutrition, physical activity and other wellness components so that all efforts work towards the same set of goals and objectives used to promote \ well-being, optimal development and strong educational outcomes.

General Guideline

- Youth Homes shall consider the components of the Centers for Disease Control's Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model in establishing other RCCI-based activities that promote wellness.
- Youth Homes shall be in compliance with drug, alcohol and tobacco-free policies.

Eating Environment

- Youth will be provided an adequate amount of time to consume their meal with a minimum of 20 minutes after receiving their food.
- Each RCCI will provide nutritious, fresh, locally grown food that reflects Montana's bountiful harvest.
- Convenient access to facilities for hand washing and oral hygiene will be available during meal periods.

Recycling

- Each RCCI shall maximize the reduction of waste by recycling, reusing, composting and purchasing recycled products.

Employee Wellness

- Youth Homes wellness committee will have a staff wellness subcommittee that focuses on staff wellness issues, identifies and distributes wellness resources and performs other functions that support staff wellness in coordination with human resources staff.
- All staff will be provided with opportunities to participate in physical activities and healthy eating programs that are accessible and free or low-cost.

Health Services

- A coordinated program of accessible health services shall be provided to youth and staff and shall include, but not be limited to, violence prevention, safety, communicable disease prevention, health screening, including body mass index, community health referrals, immunizations, parenting skills and first aid/CPR training.

Behavior Management

- Youth Homes is committed to prohibiting the use of food as a reward, unless incorporated into an activity that promotes positive nutrition messages (such as a guest chef or field trip to a farm).
- Staff will not deny or require physical activity as a means of punishment.

6. Guidelines for All Foods and Beverages Available During the School Day

Youth Homes shall operate and provide food service in accordance with USDA's National School Lunch Program (NSLP) standards and applicable laws and regulations of the state of Montana. The guidelines for reimbursable meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by USDA.

General Guidelines

- All reimbursable meals will meet nutrition standards mandated by USDA, as well as any additional state nutrition standards that go beyond USDA requirements.
- Reimbursable meals will include a variety of nutrient-dense foods, including whole grains and fiber-rich fruits and vegetables, while accommodating special dietary needs and ethnic and cultural food preferences.
- Free, potable water will be made available to all youth during each meal service.
- Youth Homes will source 5-10% of all fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers when practicable.

Competitive Foods

- No foods or beverages are currently sold to the youth outside of the reimbursable meals. If competitive food/beverages are ever sold in the future, they will meet the competitive food (Smart Snacks in School) standards found at 7 CFR 210.11.

7. Policy for Food and Beverage Marketing

- a. No food or beverage marketing occurs in the program(s). If food/beverage marketing ever does occur, it will meet the competitive food (Smart Snack Standards).

8. Evaluation and Measurement of the Implementation of the Wellness Policy

- a. Youth Homes wellness committee will update and make modifications to the wellness policy based on the results of the annual review and triennial assessments and/or as local priorities change, community needs change, wellness goals are met, new health information and technology emerges and new federal or state guidance or standards are issued. The wellness policy will be assessed as indicated at least every three years following the triennial assessment.

Triennial Progress Assessments

Youth Homes will assess the local school wellness policy to measure wellness policy compliance **at least once every three years**. This assessment will measure the implementation of the local school wellness policy, and include:

- The extent to which Youth Homes is in compliance with the local school wellness policy;
- The extent to which the local school wellness policy compares to model local school wellness policies; and
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of the local school wellness policy.

9. Informing the Public

Youth Homes will ensure that the wellness policy and most recent triennial assessment are always available to the public. Youth Homes will also actively notify households (as applicable/possible) on an annual basis about any updates made to the wellness policy and the availability of the triennial assessment results, as well as provide information to the community about the RCCI nutrition environment.

- Youth Homes will ensure the most updated version of the wellness policy and triennial assessments are always available on the website for the public to view.
- Wellness updates will be provided to youth, parents and staff, as applicable, in the form of handouts and Youth Homes website, to ensure that the community is informed, and that public input is encouraged.

10. Community Involvement

Youth Homes is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy. Youth Homes will actively communicate ways in which parents, youth, representatives of the school food authority, RCCI health professionals, staff, representatives from the local agriculture community, food and nutrition professionals and the public can participate in the development, implementation and annual review of the wellness policy through a variety of means, including:

- Youth Homes will consider youth needs in planning for a healthy nutrition environment. Youth will be asked for input and feedback using surveys and attention will be given to their comments.
- Youth Homes will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on Youth Homes website, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters to ensure that all families are actively notified of any updates to the wellness policy, as well as how to get involved and support the policy.
- Youth Homes shall permit participation by the public and RCCI community on the Wellness Committee.

Record Keeping

Records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy will include, but is not limited to the following:

- The written wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating compliance with community involvement requirements, including requirements to make the wellness policy and triennial assessments available to the public as consistent with the section on informing and updating the public; and
- Documentation of the triennial assessment of the wellness policy.