



SECTION: Miscellaneous
TITLE: Youth Wellness
VERSION: Active\2-3.26.2026
ADOPTED: November 24, 2020
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801. Youth Wellness

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote the overall health, well-being, and development of youth at Bethany Children's Home by establishing clear expectations for nutrition, physical activity, and wellness education. This policy ensures that all programs and practices support a healthy living environment where youth can learn and engage in positive lifestyle habits that contribute to long-term wellness and the development of independent living skills.

Scope:

This policy applies to all programs, team members, and departments involved in the planning, delivery, or oversight of youth nutrition, physical activity, and wellness initiatives at Bethany Children's Home. It governs food services, youth education, recreational programming, and the responsibilities of the Youth Wellness Committee, ensuring compliance with federal and state guidelines and consistent implementation across the organization.

To ensure the health and well-being of youth in our care, this policy establishes that Bethany shall provide to all youth:

- A comprehensive nutrition program consistent with federal and state requirements.
- Access to foods and beverages that meet established nutritional guidelines.

- Opportunities for developmentally appropriate physical activity during the day.
- Education on nutrition and lifelong physical activity.

In collaboration with program leadership, the Youth Wellness Committee (“Committee”) shall be responsible for the implementation and oversight of this policy and the monitoring of Bethany’s programs to ensure compliance with this policy and established guidelines.

The Committee shall serve as an advisory committee regarding children’s health issues and shall be responsible for developing, implementing, and periodically reviewing and updating the policy that complies with law to recommend to the Board of Directors (“Board”) for adoption. The Committee shall review and consider evidence-based strategies and techniques in establishing goals for nutrition, education and promotion, physical activity and other school-based activities that promote student wellness as part of the policy development and revision process.

Team Members responsible for programs related to youth wellness shall report to the CEO or VP of Programs and Operations. The Committee shall consist of the following:

- CEO
- VP of Programs and Operations
- VP of Impact and Compliance
- A member of the Program Leadership Team
- Senior Director of Finance
- The Food Service Supervisor and Cooks
- Educational Programming Supervisor

- Direct Care Team Members:
 - At least one cottage supervisor
 - At least two Cottage Support Staff (CSS) or Youth Advisors (RA)

The Committee shall conduct an assessment at least once every three (3) years on the contents and implementation of this policy as part of a continuous improvement process to strengthen the policy and ensure implementation. This triennial assessment shall be made available to the public in an accessible and easily understood manner and include:

- The extent to which Bethany is in compliance with law and policies related to wellness.
- The extent to which this policy compares to model wellness policies.
- A description of the progress made by Bethany in attaining the goals of this policy.

Recordkeeping

The Committee shall retain records documenting compliance with the requirements of the Youth Wellness policy, including:

- The approved Youth Wellness policy.
- Documentation that demonstrates that Bethany has informed the public, on an annual basis, about the contents of the policy and any updates to the policy.
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the policy, including who is involved in the review and methods used by Bethany to inform the public of their ability to participate in the review.

- Documentation demonstrating the most recent assessment on the implementation of the Youth Wellness policy and notification of the assessment results to the public.

Reporting

The CEO, VP of Programs and Operations, or Senior Director of Finance shall report to the Board on Bethany's compliance with laws and policies related to youth wellness. The report may include:

- Assessment of Bethany's environment regarding youth wellness issues.
- Evaluation of food service program.
- Listing of activities and programs conducted to promote nutrition and physical activity.
- Recommendations for policy and/or program revisions.
- Suggestions for improvement in specific areas.
- Feedback received from Team Members, youth, parents/guardians, and Youth Advisory Board.

The Senior Director of Finance and Food Service Supervisor shall provide an annual report that assures that Bethany's guidelines for reimbursable meals are not less restrictive than regulations and guidelines issued for Residential Child Care Institutions ("RCCI") in accordance with federal law.

The Committee shall annually inform and report to the public, including parents/guardians, youth, and others in the community, about the contents, updates, and implementation of this policy via Bethany's website, Youth Handbook, newsletters, posted notices and/or other efficient communication methods. This annual notification

shall include information on how to access the Youth Wellness policy; information about the most recent triennial assessment; information on how to participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the Youth Wellness policy; and a means of contacting the Committee.

Nutritional Quality of Foods and Beverages Served on Campus

Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs will:

- Be appealing and attractive to children.
- Be served in clean and pleasant settings with adequate space for seating.
- Meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations.
- Offer at least two choices of meals
- Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Serve only 1% and fat-free milk and nutritionally equivalent non-dairy alternatives (to be defined by USDA).
- Serve whole grain bread/rolls/buns at breakfast and lunch.

No food or beverage items are available for sale to youths in the form of a la carte sales, vending machine food and/or beverages during the school day.

Youth Evaluation of Food Quality

On a quarterly basis, the food service team in collaboration with the cottage supervisors will pull together a group of youth from all cottages to gather feedback on the food served. The food service team will also ask for menu suggestions and work to incorporate a version of these suggestions into a rotating menu in compliance with standards outlined by the NSLP.

On a weekly basis, the food service team will continue to engage youth through taste tests of potential menu items and collect youth feedback. Menu items will be taste-tested 2-3 times to allow for ample youth input before being placed on the rotating menu.

Other Nutritional Guidelines

Bethany will follow the recommendations of the National School Lunch Program for meals served through a central kitchen:

- No soft drinks or flavored waters are served.
- Fresh or canned fruit is served at breakfast and lunch.
- Fresh salads are frequently offered at lunch during the summer months.
- Portions are consistent with USDA serving sizes while being attuned to the diversity of youth needs and appetites.
- Fresh produce is purchased when available.
- Food and beverages shall not be used as a reward or punishment.

Nutrition Education and Nutrition Promotion

The goal of nutrition education is to teach, encourage and support healthy eating by youths. Consistent nutrition messages shall be disseminated throughout the youth cottages. Nutritional education shall be provided with the youth's Life Skills education and will be reviewed in accordance with Individualized Service Plans. Additional Life Skills education includes youths accompanying team members for food shopping to read labels and eating healthily on a budget. School-aged youth in the Independent Living program learn to prepare food on their own in preparation for living on their own.

Physical Activity

A comprehensive program of recreational activities is available to all youth residing at Bethany. The activities are scheduled in accordance with the identified needs and interests of the youth, with each youth typically being involved in at least one individual and/or one group activity per week. Youth can participate in campus programming and recreation activities to supplement their school-based physical education instruction that promotes lifelong physical activity and provides instruction in the skills and knowledge necessary for lifelong participation.

Food Marketing

Bethany Children's home does not permit the marketing or advertising of food and beverages anywhere on campus.

Non-reimbursable Meals

All meals and snacks not reimbursable through the National School Lunch Program, including snacks and meals served outside of the central kitchen, shall support youth health and well-being. These foods will be consistent with the nutrition principles of the NSLP and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans by emphasizing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy, while limiting foods and beverages high in added sugars, sodium, and saturated fats. Team members shall model healthy eating practices and ensure that foods offered are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and served in a manner that promotes positive relationships with food.

Revision History

Revision	Date	Description of Change	Approved By
1.0	11/24/20	Creation of policy	Bethany Board of Directors
2.0	3/16/26	Revision of policy; addition of NSLP 2025 review feedback; change of policy number and section	Policy Review Committee, Board of Directors