

WELLNESS POLICY

The Gemma Services Wellness Policy is designed to promote the physical health of the children and adolescents who are students and residents of the program. This policy addresses the issue of childhood obesity through procedures designed to avoid unhealthy weight gain and is monitored through the Gemma Services Health Care Management Committee, comprised of representatives from the Residential Treatment Program, Martin Luther School, Administration, and Health Care Services.

A Wellness Committee was created to serve as an advisory committee regarding children's health issues and is responsible for developing, implementing, and periodically reviewing and updating the Wellness Policy. The committee reviews and considers strategies and techniques in establishing goals for nutrition education and promotion, physical activity and other activities that promote children's wellness as part of the policy development and revision process. Members include the Food Services Manager, the Director of Healthcare, the Vice President of Operations, a Residential Child and Family Therapist, RT and MLS nursing staff, and school leadership and teachers. The committee meets at least twice a year.

The policy addresses goals in five (5) areas:

1. Nutrition Education
2. Nutrition Promotion
3. Physical Activity and Education
4. Guidelines for Food Provided on Campus
5. Other Activities Designed to Promote Child Wellness

Each goal describes a measurable action. This policy and the attainment of these goals are reviewed annually during a Wellness Committee meeting that includes staff members from Martin Luther School and the Residential Treatment Program.

Nutrition Education – The goal of nutrition education is to teach, encourage and support healthy eating habits, and to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to lead healthy lives.

- The "MyPlate" program is being implemented in both the school and Residential programs. MyPlate illustrates the five food groups that are the building blocks for a healthy diet using a familiar image: a place setting for a meal. MyPlate offers ideas and tips for children to find a healthy eating style and build it throughout their lifetime. The program emphasizes that all food and beverage choices matter.
- Children receive attractive meal menus each week that serve as teaching tools for nutritional meals. There is also regular guidance within the classrooms and occasional conversation during mealtimes.

- Menus are designed to include a variety of well-known, popular foods as well as foods that are likely to be new to the children. Staff members encourage children to try all foods that are new to them.
- Nutrition education lessons are age appropriate, relate to children's own needs, dietary restrictions and medical requirements, and follow PA health and safety standards.
- *Nutrition Promotion*- all foods available to the students during the school day are offered to students with consideration for promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity, and fall within the federal guidelines of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act (2010).
- During mealtimes, staff members talk with children about the benefits of the various food items being offered, including salads, vegetables, dairy products, protein foods and carbohydrates.
- Children receive consistent and interactive nutrition messages that teach the skills they need to adopt healthy behaviors in both the treatment program and school.
- Healthcare Services staff members help educate each child about their nutritional needs.
- Each residential child receives a nutritional assessment on entering the program and is weighed monthly, and at Martin Luther School each child's weight is assessed at least annually. The result of each assessment is discussed with the child and family whenever there is a concern that would require a protocol other than the usual meal protocol (e.g., when weight gain or weight loss is recommended).

Physical Activity and Education

- Martin Luther School students and residential children are given daily opportunities for physical activity during the afternoon and evening hours on school days and on the weekends through a range of on-campus activities including but not limited to: swimming in an indoor pool (only in summer for MLS), running, playing on the outdoor playgrounds and ball field, basketball, hopscotch, long walks, other team related sports games, and through scheduled physical education classes. Each student has the daily opportunity to join a Panther Time activity of their choice. Panther Time is 45 minutes daily and most activities are physical in nature.
- Staff members encourage parents/caregivers to support their child's participation in physical activity, to be active role models, and to include physical activity in school events.
- Physical Education class shall not be withheld for any reason.

Guidelines for Food Provided on Campus

- Foods and beverages made available to children through the National School Breakfast or Lunch Programs comply with established federal nutrition standards.
- Gemma Services does not offer foods or beverages for sale to students via vending machines or any other means during the school day. Classroom parties will offer a minimal amount of foods (2-3 items maximum) containing added sugar as the primary ingredient (e.g. cupcakes, cookies) and will provide the following: Fresh fruit and/or vegetables; Water, 100% juice, 100% juice diluted with water, low fat milk or nonfat milk.

- Menus are reviewed as required by a Food and Nutrition Advisor from the PA Department of Education.
- Marketing and advertising of foods and beverages is forbidden on school property during the school day.
- Other Activities Designed to Promote Child Wellness

Dining Environment

- Gemma Services provides a clean, safe, enjoyable environment for children.
- Gemma Services provides enough space and serving areas to ensure that all children have access to meals with minimum wait time.
- Gemma Services has water bottle fill-up stations available throughout all buildings so children and staff members have access to water at meals and throughout the day. Children were given individual plastic water bottles to use at those fountains.

Time to Eat

- Gemma Services ensures an adequate time for children to enjoy eating healthy foods with their peers and staff.
- Gemma Services schedules regular mealtimes for each class/group of children.
- Gemma Services provides snacks between meals or after meals for residential children in such a way that appetites for lunch and dinner are not disrupted and so that the children have eaten throughout the day to assure a good night's sleep.

Weight Monitoring

- Each child's height and weight are monitored on a regular basis and growth rates are reviewed by Health Care Services.
- When needed, a child follows a specialized nutritional plan that includes additional food intake to promote weight gain or portion control to minimize weight gain.
- Oversight, Public Notification and Triennial Assessment
- The Food Services Manager is responsible for the implementation and oversight of this policy. The Food Services Manager and the established Wellness Committee will conduct an assessment at least once every three years on the contents and implementation of this policy. The extent to which Gemma Services is in compliance with law and policies related to school wellness.
- The extent to which this policy compares to model wellness policies.
- A description of the progress made by Gemma Services in attaining the goals of this policy.
- At least once every three (3) years, Gemma Services will update or modify this policy as needed, based on the results of the most recent triennial assessment and/or as needs and priorities change; wellness goals are met; new health science, information and technologies emerge; and new federal or state guidance or standards are issued.

Gemma Services will annually inform and update the public, including parents/guardians, students and others in the community, about the contents, updates and implementation of this policy via the Gemma Services website, student handbooks, newsletters, posted notices and/or other efficient communication methods. This annual notification will include information on how to access the School 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 School Wellness policy; and a means of contacting Wellness Committee leadership.