

Local School Wellness Policy

Introduction

At Anderson Center for Autism, we are committed to promoting the health and well-being of our students, staff, and the school community through our local school wellness policy. Wellness goes beyond just being disease-free; it's a lifestyle that helps people achieve their best health and independence. Experts highlight the importance of exercise and diet in promoting overall well-being for individuals with developmental disabilities. Medical treatment alone isn't enough to meet their health needs effectively. Being active and eating a healthy diet can boost wellness, reduce stress, and improve mental and physical health.

Mission Statement:

"The mission of our Wellness Policy is to create a more nutritious environment for the individuals we serve with the goal of reducing obesity, and to bring awareness to healthy eating and exercise. We strive to empower our individuals to make healthy choices that promote lifelong health and well-being."

Nutrition

Nutrition Education:

At Anderson Center for Autism, we prioritize nutrition education and provide students with nutritious meals to promote healthy eating habits. Our program follows USDA guidelines and includes a variety of fresh foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy. We integrate nutrition education into classroom activities, newsletters, and communication channels, utilizing resources like the American Heart Association and the Pediatric Nutrition Care Manual. We also offer programs like the "Organic Outcomes" school garden class and the "Fresh Express" healthy fruit cart for snack times.

Our goals are to:

1. Offer nutritious meals and snacks that meet students' dietary needs and preferences.
2. Promote fruit and vegetables consumption through meals and snacks.
3. Provide nutrition education to increase awareness of healthy eating habits.
4. Increase exposure to healthy foods through sensory-based activities.
5. Enhance mealtime routines with visual support and structured schedules.
6. Increase fruit and vegetable consumption among students.

Nutrition Standards:

In terms of nutrition standards, we adhere to USDA guidelines for meals, provide access to the School Breakfast Program, offer free drinking water, and ensure quality food services through hiring criteria. We also comply with nutrition standards for snacks, school parties, and celebrations to promote healthier choices.

Our goals are to:

1. Meet students' dietary needs and preferences, considering allergies or sensitivities.
2. Offer sensory-friendly options to increase access and consumption of nutritious foods.
3. Use visual support and social stories to encourage healthy eating habits.
4. Prioritize food safety, following New York State health regulations

By emphasizing nutrition and healthy eating, we aim to support the overall well-being and development of our students. We regularly assess and evaluate our nutrition programs to ensure effectiveness and student well-being.

Physical Activity

The Physical Education department at Anderson Center for Autism focuses on developing students' motor skills through engaging activities like tennis, volleyball, swimming, and more. We provide weekly physical education classes following state standards and ensure accessible and safe playgrounds for students to be active during breaks.

Our goals are to:

1. Increase engagement in sensory-based activities like yoga, dance, and sensory walks.
2. Encourage participation in structured physical activities like adapted sports and games.
3. Improve motor skills and coordination through occupational therapy interventions.
4. Continue to broaden after-school opportunities for students to engage in voluntary physical activity programs
5. Regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness of physical activity programs.

By offering a comprehensive physical education program, we aim to enhance students' overall well-being and physical development, empowering them to lead active and healthy lives. We strive to expose students to a variety of activities and build foundational skills to participate in physical activities both at school and in the community, fostering confidence and independence in their physical abilities. Physical activity is never used as punishment or withheld as a punishment.

Healthy Campus

At our school, we prioritize promoting healthy lifestyles, nutrition, and physical activity for both students and employees. We aim to create a positive and motivating environment that encourages healthy practices and habits. Our efforts include spreading messages about wellness throughout the school and ensuring that all staff members reinforce these messages.

To support hydration, we provide bottle filling stations and drinking fountains for easy access to water, promoting healthy hydration habits among staff and students. Additionally, we prioritize employee wellness by offering an employee wellness program that includes access to resources, workshops, and activities to support well-being.

Our goals are to:

1. Provide training and resources for staff to better understand and support the unique needs of students with autism.
2. Implement strategies to reduce stress and promote self-care among staff, including mindfulness exercises and access to counseling services.
3. Create a positive and inclusive work environment that fosters collaboration and teamwork among all staff members.

By working towards these goals, we aim to create a healthy campus environment that supports the well-being of both students and employees.

Health Education

We teach the Healthy Relationships curriculum in all classrooms, covering topics like nutrition, physical activity, personal hygiene, and emotional well-being.

Our goals are to:

1. Adapt the curriculum to meet the communication and learning needs of students with autism.
2. Help students understand personal boundaries and social cues with visual supports.
3. Empower students to make healthy choices by promoting self-advocacy skills.

These goals consider the unique needs of our students and focus on providing tailored activities, supporting individualized nutrition plans, and helping staff meet students' needs effectively.

Wellness Wheel

