

Example Policy Language: Physical Activity

Examples and tips for writing policies to promote more physical activity in afterschool programs.

OSNAP Goal #1: Provide all children with at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day (include outdoor activity if possible).

Policy Writing Hints: This goal can be met with three policy statements:

1. A statement about 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day
2. A statement about all children participating in physical activity, and
3. A statement about providing outdoor activity.

1. **Policies specifying 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day:**

Example 1: Our program offers moderate to vigorous, structured, physical activity for every child 5 days a week for a minimum of 30 minutes during after school programs, and 60 minutes a day during all-day holiday and vacation programs.

Practice Implications: This policy is the most straightforward way to hold the program accountable for providing 30 minutes a day of physical activity. It will require the program to ensure that the daily schedule allows for 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day for all age groups, whether this consists of one 30-minute (or longer) block of time or whether this consists of several smaller blocks of activity time adding up to 30 minutes total. It will also require that staff members are aware of this requirement and that they must hold to it each day. If your program never provides all-day holiday or vacation programs, the last part of the policy statement can be omitted.

Example 2: Moving around and having some free time to play is important for your child's body and mind. We schedule at least 30 minutes every day for each child for either free play on the playground or gym or for organized activities such as *[Insert organized activities that your program provides here, e.g. basketball, swimming, dancing, or other games]*.

Practice Implications: This policy holds the program to the same 30 minute a day requirement as above, but gives parents a clearer idea of why the program is committed to this requirement and which activities will be used. The program will be held accountable for encouraging children to be active and providing a diverse range of activities,

which will require training of staff members. Take a look at your program schedule and see how you can rearrange it (if necessary) to include 30 minutes of activity for every child. Ask staff members which activities they would feel most comfortable leading (e.g. basketball, dance, yoga, games).

Example 3: Opportunities for moderate, fun physical activity are provided every day from [Insert time on schedule during which physical activity is offered here, e.g. 4:00- 4:30 pm].

Practice Implications: This policy statement also holds the program accountable for providing 30 minutes a day of physical activity, but also specifies the exact times during which the program does so. This can help to clarify to staff members and parents exactly when physical activity time is provided and shows that the program is very serious about ensuring that physical activity is part of every child's day.

Example 4: Physical activity is an important part of our day. To make sure children at our program get at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity each day, we schedule short activity breaks during homework time at several points throughout the afternoon.

Practice Implications: This policy statement also holds programs accountable for the 30 minutes of daily physical activity, but specifies to parents and staff members that the 30 minutes will be met by adding up several shorter breaks. This policy may be appropriate for programs with an intense focus on homework completion or other academic enrichments, which may have difficulty scheduling in a longer period for physical activity.

2. Policies specifying that all children participate every day:

Example 1: We aim for 100% child participation during moderate to vigorous physical activity time.

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to try to have all children participate in physical activity. The means through which the program does this are not very clear; it could be that the program does this through scheduling physical activity time for each child, or it could be that the program asks staff members to encourage children to participate.

Example 2: Every child in the program is given the opportunity to participate in physical activity each day. Children are encouraged, but not forced, to be active. Our program provides a range of activities, such as [insert activities here, e.g. bicycling, soccer, basketball, dance, and yoga] to make sure there is always an activity that appeals to each child.

Practice Implications: This policy also requires the program to ensure that all children have an opportunity to participate in physical activity, but outlines more specifically *how* the program will do so. The program will be held accountable for encouraging children to be active and providing a diverse range of activities, which will require training of staff members.

TIP: Do a short survey or have staff members ask children what their favorite moving activities are to see what might appeal to the kids in your program. Also, reluctant kids may be more likely to participate if they see adults participating too—encourage your staff to join in during physical activity or at least encourage kids while they are being active. Include training for staff members on how they can get involved in physical activity or encourage kids to be more physically active. You could also write a policy encouraging or requiring staff to participate (see the supplementary section).

3. Policies specifying outdoor activity when possible: and establish weather guidelines to ensure student safety.

Example 1: Except in cases of extreme weather (over 90 degrees F, under 20 degrees F, or during rain, sleet, or snow), every child at our program has an opportunity for outdoor play every day.

Practice Implications: This policy example, requires the program to provide outdoor play every day. It also lays out very specific conditions for when staff members can or cannot keep children inside, which helps ensure that children get enough outside time. Establishing weather guidelines that specify the conditions and situations that would require indoor play can be helpful for ensuring student safety and making daily weather-related decisions.

The state of Maine also created a helpful chart that program staff can use to decide whether the weather is safe for playing, and it can be downloaded here:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/documents/ocfs/childrens-licensing-and-investigation/documents/WeatherWatch.pdf>. If you have difficulty scheduling outside time because you have limited outdoor space, you may want to choose the next option, as this policy does not accommodate that particular issue. This resource from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can be helpful for recess planning and practice: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/2019_04_25_SchoolRecess_planning_508tagged.pdf

Example 2: Outdoor play time is scheduled for all children in the program as often as possible.

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to provide outdoor play time when possible, but is less specific about the definition of “when possible.” This policy statement provides staff members with more discretion as to when to keep children indoors, which can be positive because it allows more flexibility. However, if staff members tend to keep children indoors because they themselves are reluctant to go outside, this can allow them more leeway to do so.

OSNAP Goal #2: Offer 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity 3 times per week.

Policy Writing Hints: For parents, it can be helpful to give examples of vigorous physical activity in your policy statement, such as running, or to give a definition, such as “activity that gets your child’s heart rate up.”

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Practice Implications: This policy requires that staff members lead vigorous activities for 20-minute periods at least 3 times per week and that they are responsible for ensuring that every child has the opportunity to participate. This may require staff training on how to lead such activities as well as training on being able to identify which activities are considered “vigorous.” It will also require ensuring that 20 minutes of vigorous activity 3 times per week is written down in the program schedule.

Example 1: As part of our program, staff make sure every child has the opportunity to get 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity at least three times each week. Our staff members lead activities and games to get children’s blood pumping, like *[insert program activities here, such as basketball, tag, soccer, and other running games]*.

Example 2: Children are scheduled to participate in an activity that gets their heart rates up for at least 20 minutes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 4:00 – 4:30 pm. Children can choose from basketball, soccer, swimming, or dance.

Practice Implications: This policy also holds programs accountable for the 20 minutes of vigorous activity requirement but does so by clearly specifying when such activities are included in the schedule.

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