



Example Policy Language: Screen Time

Examples and tips for writing policies to reduce screen time in afterschool programs

SNAP Goal #9: Eliminate broadcast and cable TV and movies.

Example 1: Our program does not include broadcast and cable TV, commercial movies, or recreational computer use.

Practice Implications: This policy requires that the program refrain from providing any non- educational screen time, although educational TV and computer programs would be allowed.

Example 2: Television and movies are not allowed at the program.

Practice Implications: This policy completely bans all types of television at the program. If you are banning all TV/movies, make sure staff members have access to other fun, easy to lead activities to replace TV time.

OSNAP Goal #10: Limit computer and digital device time to homework or instructional time (i.e., teacher-led).

Example 1: Our program does not include broadcast and cable TV, commercial movies, recreational computer use, or use of digital devices (like smartphones). Children will not be allowed to use smartphones during the program. All computer and tablet use will be for homework or instructional use only.

Practice Implications: This policy requires that the program refrain from providing any non- educational screen time of any variety (including TV, computers, and digital devices), although educational TV and computer programs would be allowed. This would require staff to monitor children's use of smartphones or other digital devices and to monitor computer use time to ensure that it is educational, or lead educational activities on the computers.

Example 2: Children are only allowed to use computers or tablets at the program for instructional purposes. Teachers at the program lead educational activities or supervise the lab if children need to use computers or tablets for homework. Children are not allowed to use smartphones or other personal digital devices during the program.

Practice Implications: This policy goes a step further than the first example, specifying that children will be supervised by staff during computer or tablet time to either ensure that children are using the computers or tablets to do homework or following a teacher-led enrichment activity. This would require staff to both supervise labs and/or develop enrichment activities. Staff would also need to check to make sure children are not using digital devices.

Example 3: Computers or tablets may only be used for homework assignments at the program. Computer games and surfing the internet are not allowed.

Practice Implications: This policy requires that the program only allow computer or tablet use for homework– no games or internet surfing would be allowed. Staff members would be responsible for supervising children’s use of computers or tablets.

Example 4: Computers or tablets are not used at this program. If children have smartphones or other personal digital devices, our policy is for children to turn them off during program time. If a child needs to be reached during an emergency, he or she can be reached by calling the program director.

Practice Implications: This policy is the strongest, but simplest to enforce, as it simply bans computer and digital device use across the board, making it so that staff do not have to distinguish between educational/non-educational use, nor do they have to lead instructional activities. The policy would require making computers inaccessible during program time and developing a protocol for ensuring that children are not able to use their devices during program time.

TIP: Make sure that staff members have a clear understanding of what’s recreational and what’s educational. Assign staff members the responsibilities of supervising the computer lab. If you are banning computer or tablet use completely, make sure staff members have access to other fun, easy to lead activities to replace computer or tablet time.

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