

The OSNAP Guide for Writing Afterschool Wellness Policies



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Table of Contents

Helping Children Grow Up Healthy—and How Afterschool Programs Can Help.....	3
How Policies Facilitate Programs’ Plans to Promote Health	4
Purpose of This Guide and How to Use It.....	4
Policy Language for OSNAP Standards.....	6
Physical Activity.....	6
OSNAP Goal #1.....	6
OSNAP Goal #2.....	8
Healthy Beverages & Snacks	9
OSNAP Goal #3	9
OSNAP Goal #4	11
OSNAP Goal #5	12
OSNAP Goal #6	12
OSNAP Goal #7	13
Screen Time	13
OSNAP Goal #9	13
OSNAP Goal #10.....	14
Supplementary Policy Language.....	16
Foods and Beverages	16
Physical Activity	21
Screen Time	22
Sample letters to communicate policy changes to parents	23

Helping Children Grow Up Healthy— and How Afterschool Programs Can Help

Obesity in childhood is a major health concern in the United States and throughout the world. Nearly 20% of children and adolescents in the U.S. have obesity. Obesity in childhood raises the risk of health problems like high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes during childhood. It also makes it more likely that a child will have obesity when they grow up and have a greater risk for developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer.

What children eat and drink, how much they are physically active, and how much time they spend in front of a television, computer, video game, or other electronic screen play an important role in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. But nutrition, physical activity, and screen time are important for the health of *all* children, regardless of whether they struggle with extra weight. Most children do not eat enough fruits, vegetables, or whole grains and consume too many sugary drinks, salty snacks, and sweets. Very few children get enough physical activity each day to stay healthy and strong.

The good news is that it is possible to help children get healthier by improving nutrition, increasing physical activity, and reducing their time spent watching TV or other electronic screens. Afterschool programs can play an important role by making sure that children have access to healthy foods and beverages, limiting their exposure to unhealthy foods and beverages, setting aside time for physical activity each day, and limiting screen time.

The Out-of-School Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative (OSNAP), a project of the Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, lays out key standards that programs can follow to help promote a healthy after-school environment for kids:

1. Provide all children with at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day (include outdoor activity if possible)
2. Offer 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity 3 times per week
3. Do not serve sugary drinks at the program
4. Do not allow sugary drinks to be brought in during program time
5. Serve water every day
6. Offer a fruit and/or vegetable option every meal and snack
7. When serving grains (like bread, cereals and crackers) at snack, serve whole grains.
8. Eliminate commercial broadcast TV and movies
9. Limit computer and digital device time to homework or instructional (i.e., teacher-led) time

How Policies Facilitate Programs' Plans to Promote Health

Setting down written policies about nutrition, physical activity, and screen time is an important action step for afterschool programs trying to promote children's health. Written policies help make it absolutely clear to program administrators, staff, parents, and children what the program's rules and expectations are. These policies can often be found in family, staff, or general handbooks. Written policies can also be communicated to staff and parents in training materials or newsletters. Afterschool programs often rely primarily on spoken or informal, unwritten policies to determine practice. While these are important, formal, written policies have several advantages.

First, having a written policy ensures that *everyone* is aware of what is expected from them and what they can expect from the program, while spoken or informal policies may not ever get communicated to some people.

Second, having a written policy ensures that the program policies are very clear. A written policy makes it less likely that a staff member or parent will misunderstand the program's goals and practices.

Third, a written policy helps hold program staff, parents, and children accountable for following the program's rules, compared to an informal policy, which is more difficult to enforce.

Fourth, written policies help ensure that policies are sustainable over time. If an administrator or staff member with important knowledge about practices leaves the program, future staff members will know how to keep children healthy based on the written policies.

Purpose of This Guide and How to Use It

This guide provides suggestions for language that can be directly inserted into parent or family handbooks, staff handbooks, general program handbooks, letters to families, staff training materials, or even schedules and menus. The suggested language in this guide lays out policies that match with the OSNAP standards listed above. Including these policies will help ensure that your program meets these goals and sticks with them in the future. Supplementary language for other policies that support healthy eating, increased physical activity, and reduced screen time are also included at the end of this guide. When possible, several options have been provided for each goal so that you can choose language that best fits your individual program.

Each piece of policy language is followed by an explanation of how practices would have to be changed to implement the policy. This is so that the implications of including each policy

are very clear. While the language in this guide can, of course, be changed, it is important to carefully think about what your changes might mean for practice. For example, a policy that states that families *should* stop from sending in sugary drinks is weaker than a policy stating that families *must* stop from sending them in. Using “should” means that following the policy is encouraged, but not required, while using “must” means that the policy is a hard-and-fast rule. Most of the pieces of policy language in this guide have already been used with after-school programs, so we know they can work.

Policy Language for OSNAP Standards

The following section provides examples for policy language that you can insert into parent, staff, or general handbooks. Examples are given for policies that help meet each of the OSNAP program goals. Other policy language that can help improve nutrition, increase physical activity, and decrease TV and computer time at the program is also included.

Physical Activity

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.

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.”

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.

Healthy Beverages & Snacks

Goal #3: Do not serve sugary drinks at the program.

Policy Writing Hints: It is important to give examples of the sugary drinks you do not allow and the allowable healthy drinks in your policy statement.

Example 1: Sugary drinks (also known as sugar-sweetened beverages), including sodas, fruit drinks, lemonades, sweetened iced teas, and energy drinks, are not allowed to be served during program hours. We serve only unsweetened, unflavored water and milk.

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to refrain from serving sugary drinks and specifies that the program will only serve water and milk. While juice is not prohibited in this policy, it is not listed as a beverage provided by the program, either. This policy also does not specify whether the milk has to be low-fat or skim milk, although it does ensure that only plain milk can be served. Before listing these restrictions, make sure that it is possible to follow through with this policy by checking with your food service provider. If you have little control over what is served because of your food service provider, you may want to modify the language. Refer to the [USDA Smart Snacks standards](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/smartsnacks.pdf) for more details and information on healthy beverages, including guidance for milk and juice for elementary, middle and high school students. View the Smart Snacks Standards: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/smartsnacks.pdf>

Example 2: Only water, milk, and 100% juice are allowed at the program.

Practice Implications: This policy also requires the program to refrain from serving sugary drinks, but does so by specifying only what drinks are allowed. The policy again does not specify whether milk has to be low-fat or skim, and also does not indicate that milk has to be plain. This policy is also lenient in terms of portion sizes. Again, check with your food service provider to make sure it is possible to follow through on this policy statement. Refer to the [USDA Smart Snacks standards](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/smartsnacks.pdf) for more details and information on healthy beverages, including guidance for milk and juice for elementary, middle and high school students. View the Smart Snacks Standards: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/smartsnacks.pdf>

Example 3: Beverages provided at the program will consist only of:

- Low-fat (1%) or fat-free unflavored milk (8 oz serving size)
- 100 percent juice (limit of ½ cup or 4 fluid ounces per day)
- Water without added ingredients, e.g., flavors, sugars, sweeteners (natural, artificial and nonnutritive), and caffeine.

Practice Implications: This policy also bans program-provided sugary beverages by specifying what beverages are served through the program. This policy is more specific with regard to the types of beverages allowed, specifying the fat content of milk and that milk must be unflavored and specifying a portion size limit for juice. Refer to the [USDA Smart Snacks standards](#) for more details and information on healthy beverages, including guidance for milk and juice for elementary, middle and high school students. View the Smart Snacks Standards: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/smartsnacks.pdf>

Goal #4: Do not allow sugary drinks to be brought in during program time.

Example 1: Only beverages provided by the snack program are allowed at the program.

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to ban all beverages from outside the snack program, including beverages sent in by parents and beverages purchased by children at school stores or vending machines. It also requires that partner programs (such as Girl Scouts or special tutoring programs run by a local college) cannot bring beverages into the program either. It will require staff members to monitor whether children have brought beverages into the snack program and, if children do have outside beverages, to confiscate them until the program is over. This policy is easy to implement because it applies to all beverages and does not require staff, parents or children to try to distinguish between different beverage types.

Example 2: Although children are allowed to bring in bottles of plain, unsweetened water to the program, no child is allowed to bring in sugar-sweetened beverages (sodas, fruit drinks, lemonades, sweetened iced teas, or energy drinks).

Practice Implications: This policy is less stringent and requires children to refrain from bringing in sugar-sweetened beverages only; water is allowed. This policy also does not require anything of partner programs who may bring beverages into the after-school site. It will require staff members to monitor what beverages children have brought in and to confiscate any beverages meeting the criteria of sugar-sweetened beverages. This policy is more complicated to implement because it requires time and extra training for staff to determine what counts as a sugar-sweetened beverages and which beverages should be confiscated.

Example 3: Students should not bring food or drinks to the program (with the exception of students with special dietary restrictions).

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to prevent students from bringing in all beverages and foods, with an exception for students with special dietary restrictions. This policy may also be easier to implement as it does not require program staff to devote time to figuring out whether a food or beverage is OK to have at the program.

Goal #5: Serve water every day.

Example 1: We offer water as the primary drink at every meal and snack.

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to serve water at every meal and snack as the preferred beverage with snack. Allowing children to use a drinking fountain or water cooler would not fulfill this policy. This policy would require the program to serve water prominently at meal and snack time using cups that are the same size as other beverages (e.g., milk or another beverage offering). It would also require staff members who serve meals/snack to specify to children that water should be taken as part of snack.

Example 2: Although we sometimes offer milk or 100% juice as a beverage option at meals and snack, water is always offered either alone or in combination with other beverages.

Practice Implications: This policy also requires the program to serve water each day at meals and snack, though it does not specify that water must be the primary beverage, so it could be served alongside juice or milk rather than promoted as the main drink. This policy would also require the program to serve water in cups at snack and meal times; simply allowing children access to a drinking fountain or water cooler would not suffice.

TIP: Train staff members on how to wash water coolers and pitchers, and how often they should do it. Encourage staff members to make positive statements about drinking water when they serve it to the kids, such as “I’m pretty thirsty, water will make me feel great!” to help kids get more excited about drinking water (especially if they are wanting a sugary drink instead). Staff members can also flavor water with slices of lemon or other fruits to add a fun twist.

Goal #6: Offer a fruit and/or vegetable option at every meal and snack.

Example 1: Each meal and snack always contain at least one serving of fruit or vegetables, such as peaches or carrot sticks.

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to provide at least $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cut-up fruits or vegetables or 1 medium-sized piece of whole fruit each day (using the serving size definitions of the National School Lunch Program). Check with your food service provider to make sure it is possible to follow through on this policy statement. If not, you can modify it to

the number of times per week you are able to serve fruits and vegetables.

Example 2: We offer children a fruit or vegetable option every day afterschool and three-a-day in all-day holiday and vacation programs.

Practice Implications: This policy also requires the program to provide at least $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cut-up fruits or vegetables, 1 cup of leafy vegetables, or 1 medium-sized piece of whole fruit each day at snack, and also specifies that two servings must also be provided at lunch for full-day programs. Check with your food service provider to make sure it is possible to follow through on this policy statement.

Goal #7: When serving grains (like bread, cereals and crackers), serve whole grains.

Example 1: Whole grain products, with ingredients like whole wheat and whole oats, are healthier and more nutritious than refined grain products made with white flour. When we serve grain products at meals and snack, like bread, cereals, and crackers, we only serve products where a whole grain is the first ingredient on the ingredient list.

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to serve whole grains whenever grain products are served at meals and snack, and also helps define for families and staff what a whole grain product is. Meeting this policy may require working with your food service provider to find whole grain options.

Screen Time

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.

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 tables 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.

Supplementary Policy Language

Foods and Beverages

Celebrations during the afterschool program are consistent with the program's healthy eating goals.

Example: Foods and beverages served during celebrations, such as holidays or birthday parties, must meet the [Smart Snacks in Schools] or [school district's Competitive Food] Guidelines. Foods and beverages brought into the program for celebrations must also be consistent with these guidelines.

Practice Implications: This policy requires that both the program and anyone bringing food into the program (such as parents or partner organizations) stick to established Smart Snacks in School Guidelines for celebrations. It will be necessary to familiarize yourself with these guidelines as well as guidance on allowable foods and beverages, and to provide parents and partner organizations with suggestions for foods and beverages (as well as suggestions for alternatives to food). The following handout may be a good resource: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/smartsnacks.pdf>

Example: Our program tries to promote healthy foods and beverages for children. It is important that we send children consistent messages about nutrition. Therefore, only water or milk will be allowed as beverages at celebrations. Cupcakes, cake, candy, ice cream, cookies, and chips will not be allowed. We also encourage non-food activities for celebrations.

Practice Implications: This policy also requires that both the program and anyone bringing food into the program refrain from bringing in unhealthy foods and beverages. This program specifies which types of beverages and foods are not allowed for celebrations. Following this policy will require that parents and partner organizations be made aware of the new policy and are aware that they cannot bring in unhealthy foods and beverages. It will also require that staff members are aware of the restrictions on celebration foods and beverages and must confiscate or send back any foods or beverages that do not meet the guidelines. Providing staff members, parents, and partner organizations with suggestions for alternatives will also be essential.

Partner organizations providing activities to children during program time must serve foods and beverages consistent with the program's nutrition guidelines.

Example: All foods made available to children through partner organizations (such as [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME HERE]) will meet our program nutrition guidelines. Partner organizations are not allowed to serve sugary drinks and will be asked to serve fruits and vegetables.

Practice Implications: This policy requires clearly that partner organizations who provide activities to children during program time (such as the Girl Scouts or tutors from local colleges) cannot bring sugary drinks into the program. It will be necessary to speak with partner organization staff about nutrition guidelines. It will also be necessary to monitor the foods brought in by partner organizations to ensure that they meet the guidelines.

Example: Organizations that partner with us to provide afterschool activities or enrichment (such as INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME HERE) are prohibited from bringing foods and beverages to serve to children.

Practice Implications: This policy is more restrictive, prohibiting partner organizations from bringing in snacks and beverages at all. While this policy is clearly broader, it also may be easier to enforce because it will not require training the partner organizations on the nutrition guidelines nor will it require monitoring of foods brought into the program.

Fundraising activities do not involve unhealthy foods and beverages.

Example: Fundraising activities for the afterschool program will not involve foods or beverages.

Practice Implications: This policy outlines a straightforward solution for eliminating unhealthy foods and beverages for fundraising by simply banning all foods and beverages. While this is more restrictive than only allowing certain foods and beverages, this policy may be easier and less confusing to enforce. Staff, parents, and partner organizations must be trained on the new policy and provided with alternative ideas for fundraising (see <https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/fundraising-healthier-ways-to-rake-it-in/>).

Example: Fundraising activities for the afterschool program will rarely involve foods or beverages. When foods or beverages are used for fundraising activities, they must meet the District Nutrition Standards. Fruits, vegetables, and water will be encouraged.

Practice Implications: This policy allows foods and beverages for fundraising, but specifies clearly that they must meet nutrition standards, which is required for all programs taking place on school property. Staff, parents, and others involved in fundraising efforts must be made aware of the policy. Staff members must monitor the foods and beverages sold at fundraisers to ensure that they adhere to these guidelines. All those involved in fundraising should be provided with a list of alternative activities to selling foods and beverages as well as a list of acceptable foods and beverages if they still choose to sell them.

Meetings, workshops, and family events do not involve unhealthy foods and beverages.

Example: As part of our efforts to send consistent messages about healthy eating and drinking, only foods and beverages consistent with our program's nutrition guidelines will be served at all meetings, workshops, and family events at the afterschool program.

Practice Implications: This policy requires that all refreshments served at meetings or other events that take place during the afterschool program are also consistent with the healthy eating guidelines used by the program. It will require staff members and those convening such meetings and events to be aware of the guidelines that have been adopted by the program (i.e. no sugary drinks, encouragement of water, fruits, and vegetables) and for staff members to monitor what is served.

Drinking water is freely available throughout the program.

Example: Staff members offer water to children often during the program. If water is not available in the immediate program space, staff bring children to water for water breaks. Pitchers of water and cups are provided for children to serve themselves when they are thirsty.

Practice Implications: This policy requires the program to ensure that children have access to drinking water apart from being served as a beverage during meal and snack time and allows some flexibility for how water is delivered. It will be necessary to figure out the best way to get water to students, whether through a drinking fountain in the program space or through bringing pitchers and cups into the classroom. Staff will need to be trained on keeping water sources clean as well as being trained on their obligation to periodically offer water to children.

Example: Drinking water availability is an essential component of student wellness. The program will work with the school and food services to provide water at snack as a beverage every day and provide access to free, clean, safe drinking water throughout the afterschool program time.

Practice Implications: This policy also requires the program to provide water both at meals and snack and as an available beverage during the program time, but is less specific about the details of how water will be delivered. This policy statement may be a good option for programs that are working towards being able to provide water throughout program time, but may not yet be able to achieve it every day.

Staff make positive statements about healthy eating.

Example: Helping children form healthy eating habits is an important part of snack time. Therefore, staff encourage (not force) children to try healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and water. Staff are also sure to make positive statements about healthy foods and healthy eating during snack time, such as "These apples taste sweet" or "These carrots are nice and crunchy" or "I'm feeling thirsty—I'll have some water, I know it's good for me."

Practice Implications: This policy will require training staff on the importance of making positive statements about healthy foods in front of children and examples of positive statements they could make.

Vending machine sales are restricted.

Example: Children are not allowed to use vending machines on the premises during program hours.

Practice Implications: This policy places limits on children's access to vending machines. Because the policy says "restricted," this could either mean that children are not allowed to use the vending machines at all or that children are only allowed to purchase healthy products. Depending on what works for your program, this could either mean that you a) unplug vending machines during program hours so no one can access them at all; b) train staff to prevent children from purchasing anything from the vending machines; or c) train staff to monitor what children buy from vending machines and prevent them from buying restricted foods/beverages. Limiting vending machine sales completely may be the simplest option.

Example: The program works with the school to ensure that vending machines are turned off or unplugged during program hours.

Practice Implications: This policy is more straightforward – it stipulates that children will not have access to vending machine sales at all by requiring that the machines are simply not turned on.

Staff are encouraged to model healthy eating and drinking.

Example: Children learn healthy habits by watching adults. Staff members are therefore encouraged to eat healthy snacks (such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) in front of the children and drink healthy beverages (such as water).

Practice Implications: This policy requires training of staff on what counts as a healthy food or beverage. It may also require training of staff on foods/beverages that they should *not* consume in front of children (particularly sugar-sweetened beverages, candy, salty snacks, or foods in branded packaging).

Food is not allowed as a punishment or reward.

Example: Food is never to be used as a punishment or reward.

Practice Implications: Using food as a behavioral consequence has been shown to have a negative impact on eating habits – it can make it more likely that children crave sweets or other treats more strongly than healthy foods. While some state regulations prohibit the practice of withholding food as punishment, this policy statement goes further and stipulates that food cannot be used as a reward for good behavior, either. If this is common at your program, this may require training of staff in alternative ways to manage children's behavior and develop a list of other fun rewards (see

<https://api.healthiergeneration.org/resource/154> for more ideas).

Children are given opportunities to participate in food preparation.

Example: Whenever possible, children are involved in activities to help prepare snacks,

Practice Implications: This policy requires that the program involve children in food preparation. While this could be as elaborate as structured cooking classes, programs could also fulfill this policy requirement by ensuring that children are snack helpers and help to set out foods and beverages. The program may want to include snack preparation time on the program schedule and train staff on how to involve children in snack preparation.

Nutrition education is required.

Example: The program provides activities for children to learn about nutrition at least twice per month.

Practice Implications: This policy will require that the program places nutrition education activities in the program schedule. The program will need to ensure that a staff member can lead a nutrition education activity (such as those outlined in the Food and Fun curriculum).

Nutrition training is required for program staff.

Example: Our yearly staff orientation includes a basic training on nutrition.

Practice Implications: This policy, which reiterates one of the Massachusetts state regulations, will require that program administrators include training on nutrition as part of general staff training. Program administrators may want to use resources from the USDA, their local school system, or other partner organizations to find appropriate training materials.

Parents must be informed of changes to the menu.

Example: The snack menu is the only way for parents to know what their children have been eating during the afterschool program. If a different snack is served than what is listed on the menu, staff must notify parents.

Practice Implications: This policy will require either a re-posting of the modified snack menu in the program space or will require staff members to notify parents of the change in the snack menu (i.e., through newsletters, e-mail communications, or at pick-up).

NOTE: Updates to the OSNAP Standards (Related to Foods and Beverages)

“Do not serve foods with trans fat” is no longer included as an OSNAP standard because of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) ban on trans fats in the United States. In 2015, the FDA

declared partially hydrogenated oils (the main source of artificial trans fat) as unsafe for use in human food. Food manufacturers had three years to remove partially hydrogenated oils from their products. Given this policy success, afterschool programs should now be in compliance with this OSNAP standard. However, trans fat remains prevalent in some countries where inexpensive partially hydrogenated oils have become staples not only for the food industry, but also for home use. If you are implementing OSNAP outside of the US where there are no regulations on trans fats, make sure to include the tips and lessons on the topic.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/fats-and-cholesterol/types-of-fat/transfats/>

Physical Activity

Staff participation in physical activity with children.

Example: Staff members are expected to participate in physical activity with children. If staff members are unable to participate, they are expected to encourage children as they play (such as, “Wow, that was a big jump! Can you jump even higher?” or “You’re almost at the finish line! You can do it”).

Practice Implications: This policy requires that staff participate in physical activity with children or encourage them. The program should ask potential staff members upon hiring them about their willingness or comfort with participating in physical activity. Staff members should be asked about which activities they feel comfortable participating in and encouraged to do so. Several staff members may be uncomfortable with participating due to their own physical fitness levels; in this case, the program can ask them to make positive and encouraging statements to children during physical activity.

Withholding play time as a punishment is prohibited

Example: Children are not to be denied physical activity as discipline for negative behavior.

Practice Implications: This policy would require the program to find alternative means of behavioral management if withholding recess or play time is a current practice.

Example: Staff members will not use physical activity (e.g., running laps, pushups) or withhold opportunities for physical activity (e.g., outdoor play, swim time) as punishment.

Practice Implications: This policy also requires the program to refrain from using physical activity as a punishment, but is more specific, noting that physical activity should not be withheld or forced.

Screen Time

Restrictions on which websites can be accessed by children.

Example: The program utilizes a pop-up blocker to minimize advertisements to children during computer and tablet time. Only educational websites with no advertising are allowed to be visited by children during program time.

Practice Implications: This policy will require the program to limit the websites accessed by children, either through staff supervision of children's computer or tablet time or by working with system administrators to use pop-up blockers or to block certain websites from children's use during program time.

Example: Computer and tablet time is used only for educational games and homework. Internet access is prohibited during program hours.

Practice Implications: This policy takes a simpler but more extreme approach by simply blocking the Internet from children's use during program hours.

Sample letters to communicate policy changes to parents

Site letterhead here

Date

Dear Families,

Helping your children be healthy and learn to make good choices is important to us at [PROGRAM NAME]. We are writing to let you know about a change in our policies for snack time. Beginning on [START DATE], sugary drinks will no longer be allowed at [PROGRAM NAME]. Sugary drinks include:

- Sodas
- Fruit drinks, such as lemonade, cranberry juice cocktail, or other fruit drinks that are not 100% juice
- Sweetened iced teas
- Sports drinks
- Energy drinks
- Sweetened waters (such as Vitamin Water)

We are starting this policy because we want to help your child stay healthy and eat well. We will only serve low fat milk, 100% juice, and water through our snack program and any other time during the afternoon. We ask that when children bring drinks from home, or partner programs that come in to work with the children bring drinks, that they only bring unsweetened water, 100% juice for low-fat milk. We are doing this because sugary drinks can add a lot of extra calories to what you eat without being good for your health. For example, a 12 ounce can of soda has about 10 whole teaspoons of sugar in it, while a bottle of Vitamin Water has about 8 teaspoons of sugar. By keeping sugary drinks like these out of the afterschool program, we can cut down the amount of sugar kids are drinking and help them learn to choose healthier drinks.

To help us with this policy, please do not send your child to [PROGRAM NAME] with *any* of the sugary drinks listed above. Water is always available to your child here, and we may also provide low fat milk or juice. If you choose to send your child in with an extra drink, please only send milk, unsweetened water, or 100% juice. If children do have any sugary drinks with them, staff members will ask that they keep them in their bag until it is time for pick-up.

Thank you for your help. If you have any questions please contact [CONTACT NAME] at [PHONE or EMAIL].

Regards,
[name/title]

Resources:
Food and Fun Parent Info Flyer: Healthy Hydration
Food and Fun Unit 3: Be Sugar Smart

Site letterhead here

Date

Dear Families,

We are writing to let you know about a change in our policies for snack time. Beginning on [START DATE], only foods and drinks given by the snack program will be served at [PROGRAM NAME]. This means that children may no longer bring their own snacks and drinks (except for children with limits to what they can eat or allergies to certain foods). We are also no longer letting any other programs, volunteers, or visitors to bring food and drinks to the program.

We are starting this new policy because your child's health and safety are important. Keeping food and drinks from coming into the program helps us keep your children healthy and safe in many ways. This policy helps children who have allergies. Children often share or trade their snacks or drinks, and this policy will help stop kids with food allergies from eating another child's snack that might make them sick. Also, because everyone will have the same food and drinks, it keeps kids focused on having fun. Last, but not least, it helps make sure that all kids at [PROGRAM NAME] get a healthy snack every day that will keep them healthy, full of energy and focused. We want kids to eat well for their whole lives.

To help us with this policy, please do not send your child to [PROGRAM NAME] with *any* foods or drinks. If children do have any foods or drinks with them, staff members will ask that they keep them in their bag until it is time for pick-up. If your child has an allergy or food limit that stops him or her from eating the snack given by the program, or if you have any other questions, please speak with [NAME] at [PHONE or EMAIL].

Regards,
[name/title]

Site letterhead here

Date

Dear Families,

We are writing to let you know about a change in our policies for snack time at [PROGRAM NAME]. Beginning on [START DATE], we will be serving water as a drink choice every day during snack. This will mean that water is always offered at snack, either alone or with other drinks (low fat milk or 100% juice). The staff members at [PROGRAM NAME] will be make sure that cups are given to children at snack time every day and make sure children can drink water whenever they are thirsty.

We are making this policy because we want to help your child stay healthy and eat well. Drinking lots of water is important because it keeps kids from getting too thirsty without adding extra sugar to what they eat. Serving water at snack time every day helps kids learn that water is always a good choice when they want something to drink, whether it is with a meal, a snack, or just by itself.

To help us with this policy, you can talk to your child about healthy drinks and how drinking water keeps us hydrated. You can also serve and drink water at home.

Thank you for your help. If you have any questions please contact [CONTACT NAME] at [PHONE or EMAIL].

Regards,
[name/title]

Resources:
Food and Fun Parent Info Flyer: Healthy Hydration
Food and Fun Unit 10: Hydration

Site letterhead here

Date

Dear Families,

The staff here at [PROGRAM NAME] hopes to provide your child with a safe, healthy, and fun afterschool program. We have been looking at our program policies to see how we can make sure that [PROGRAM NAME] does its best to keep your child healthy. We are writing to let you know about a change in our policies for computers, tablets, video games, and television time during afterschool. Beginning on [START DATE]:

[CHOOSE OPTIONS RIGHT FOR YOUR SITE – you can pick none, some, or write your own – these are only suggested additions – choose ones that would work for your specific program]

- Regular broadcast television or movies will no longer be shown at the program. Only educational television programming (such as PBS' Zoom) will be allowed, and this television time will be limited to 30 minutes or less per day.

OR

- We will no longer be showing any television or movies at the program.
- Computer and tablet use will be limited to one hour per day. Our staff will make sure no child has too much time on the computer.

OR

- During the program, children will only be allowed to use computers and tablets for homework. Each child is only allowed to use a computer for 1 hour per day.

YOU CAN ALSO ADD:

- Computer or tablet time is used only for educational games and homework. Internet use is not allowed during program hours.

We are starting this policy to help your child stay healthy and focused during the afterschool program.

When kids are watching TV, they are not being active, playing with other kids, or being creative. TV and the internet also show a lot of ads to kids. A lot of the advertising is for unhealthy foods and drinks.

To help us with this policy, you can help your child to enjoy other activities, both during the afterschool program and at home. If your child is unhappy about having less TV or computer time, talk to them about other activities that they enjoy. These activities might be playing outside, talking with their friends, drawing, or playing a board game. Thank you for your help. If you have any questions, please contact [CONTACT NAME] at [PHONE or EMAIL].

Regards,

[name/title]

Resources:

Food and Fun Parent Info Flyer: Take Control of TV

Food and Fun Unit 8: Tune Out

Date

Dear Families,

The staff at [PROGRAM NAME] is excited to help your child learn, have fun, and grow up healthy. Children need to play and be active every day to stay healthy. Physical activity can stop children from getting illnesses like diabetes and heart disease when they are older. Activity can also help kids sleep at night, stay focused at school and have more energy. All of these things are important to help your child do well in school.

Experts say that children should get at least one hour of physical activity a day. While kids have opportunities to be active during the school day, most kids still need at least 30 more minutes of activity after the school day ends. We think our program can help kids get those 30 more minutes — which helps them stay healthy and be good students.

[CHOOSE OPTIONS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR SITE – you can pick none, some, or write your own – these are only suggested additions – choose ones that would work for your specific program:]

This year we are working to offer more activities like [LIST OF ACTIVITIES THE SITE CURRENTLY OFFERS] every day. If you have a special skill (like basketball, dancing, or karate) and would like to volunteer to teach a class, please let [CONTACT PERSON'S NAME AND PHONE/EMAIL] know.

AND/OR

We are changing our schedule to make sure that every child has the chance to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

AND/OR

As part of this goal, we're starting [INSERT IDEAS FROM LEARNING COMMUNITIES HERE – could include things like clubs, dance programs, walking group, etc.]

AND/OR

This year we will also include fitness breaks to help kids focus during homework time. The breaks also give kids more chances to get moving during the program. Even short 10-minute breaks of activity can make a difference!

YOU COULD ALSO ADD...

When possible, we like to take the children outside to play. Please make sure to send them dressed for having fun in the sun or the cold!

You can help by talking to your child about the physical activities we offer and encouraging him or her to join in. On the weekends, try visiting places where your child can be active such as public parks or playgrounds. Or just get active at home! Take a walk around the block or dance around the house to get everyone up and moving.

If you have any questions, please contact [CONTACT NAME] at [PHONE or EMAIL].

Regards,
[name/title]

Resources:
Food and Fun Parent Info Flyer: Activate Your Family
Food and Fun Unit 2: Get Moving
Food and Fun Unit 9: Play Hard