

# DCYF Alternative Education Program at the Rhode Island Training School

## Wellness Policy



## I. **Policy Intent and Rationale**

The DCYF Alternative Education Program (AEP) Wellness Policy establishes a framework to promote student health, well-being, and academic success within an alternative education program operating in a juvenile correctional facility. The AEP promotes a healthy school environment by supporting students' physical, mental, social, and emotional wellness as an integral part of both the educational and rehabilitative process.

Schools play a critical role in supporting the overall health of students by promoting good nutrition, physical activity, and social-emotional well-being. Research demonstrates that improved health enhances students' capacity to learn, supports positive behavior, and maximizes academic potential, helping to ensure that all students are provided equal opportunities to succeed.

As an alternative education program located within a structured and secure correctional setting, the AEP serves a population with unique social, emotional, and behavioral needs. This policy acknowledges the program's distinct structure and security requirements and supports wellness practices that are developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and feasible within a secure environment, while remaining fully compliant with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

This wellness policy applies to all students enrolled in the program during the school day and is established in accordance with:

1. The **Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004**
2. The **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA)**
3. **Rhode Island General Laws §16-21-28** (Health and Wellness Subcommittee)
4. **Rhode Island General Laws §16-2-9** (General powers and duties of school committees)
5. **Rhode Island Department of Education Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs (216-RICR-20-10-4)**

This document constitutes the DCYF Alternative Education Program's Local School Wellness Policy, as required for participation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

## II. **Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Framework**

The AEP will incorporate the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) framework to guide comprehensive school wellness efforts. This model integrates health and learning by addressing the whole child within the school, facility, family, and community context, as appropriate in a secure educational setting. It emphasizes the use of evidence-based strategies, trauma-informed practices, and cross-system collaboration to promote physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being while supporting students' ability to learn.

The WSCC framework is particularly appropriate for alternative education programs serving justice-involved youth, as it supports coordinated services, positive school climate, and individualized supports within structured environments. The ten WSCC components include:

1. Physical Education and Physical Activity
2. Nutrition Environment and Services
3. Health Education
4. Social and Emotional Climate
5. Physical Environment
6. Health Services
7. Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services
8. Employee Wellness
9. Community Involvement (as appropriate within a correctional setting)
10. Family Engagement (as appropriate within a correctional setting)

### III. **Policy Goals**

The goals of the AEP Wellness Policy are to:

1. Provide and maintain a structured learning environment that promotes lifelong wellness behaviors by incorporating wellness education and healthy practices.
2. Ensure and document access to nutritious meals and snacks that meet or exceed USDA requirements, HHFKA standards, and Rhode Island Nutrition Requirements (RINR) standards.
3. Provide regular, safe, and developmentally appropriate opportunities for physical activity in alignment with facility security requirements.
4. Support student mental health through trauma-informed practices within the educational environment and facilitating access to appropriate services.
5. Maintain compliance with all applicable federal and state school wellness requirements through ongoing monitoring and documentation.
6. Establish and maintain a facility-wide Health and Wellness Committee as required by Rhode Island General Laws §16-21-28, with the purposes of:
  - a. Developing guidance to explicate and support policy implementation
  - b. Monitoring and documenting implementation and compliance
  - c. Evaluating policy progress
  - d. Serving as a wellness resource
  - e. Revising the policy, as needed, based on new federal or state regulations, national recommendations, and assessment results.

### IV. **Wellness Leadership Committee**

*Rhode Island General Laws §16-21-28 requires the establishment of a coordinated school health and wellness subcommittee.*

The AEP designates the following leadership to oversee the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of this Wellness Policy:

#### **Wellness Policy Coordinator:**

- Dr. Heather Dos Santos, School Principal and Special Education Director
- The Wellness Policy Coordinator has the authority to ensure compliance and to implement corrective actions when necessary.

#### **Supporting Members may include:**

- Food Service Administrator – Jacqueline Iasimone
- School Culinary Arts Administrator – Cathleen Hyland
- Mental health or clinical staff member – Tracy Hoffler
- Physical education or instructional staff member – Dawn McPhillips

- Facility administration liaison, as appropriate

This committee shall meet quarterly, no less than four times during the school year. Participation is limited to individuals authorized by the facility.

Committee Responsibilities include:

- Coordinating wellness initiatives across WSCC components
- Monitoring implementation of this policy
- Reviewing and updating procedures
- Ensuring compliance with nutrition and physical activity standards
- Coordinating wellness-related supports and services
- Participating in required policy review and assessments
- Reporting annually to the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE)

#### **V. General Wellness**

The AEP's health education, physical education, and health services align with Rhode Island Regulations for School Health Programs (216-RICR-20-10-4). The AEP adheres to applicable CDC guidance, state and federal health regulations, and facility safety and security protocols.

The promotion of lifelong healthy eating habits and physical activity establishes linkages between health education, school meal programs, and related community services.

#### **VI. Health & Nutrition Education and Wellness Promotion**

Health education is provided for all students enrolled in the AEP in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws §16-22-4 and Sections 3–5 of the Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs (216-RICR-20-10-4).

Nutrition education instruction shall be aligned with the Rhode Island Health Education Framework and informed by the current National Health Education Standards, where feasible, to support student knowledge, skills, and health literacy.

Consistent with the WSCC framework, the AEP reviews and considers evidence-based strategies when determining nutrition education and wellness promotion activities.

##### **Goals:**

1. Aligning instruction with state academic standards and current national health education standards, where feasible
2. Teaching practical nutrition skills such as understanding food groups, balanced meals, hydration, portion awareness, and reading nutrition labels
3. Making connections between nutrition, physical health, mental health, and emotional regulation
4. Reinforcing healthy messages through classroom instruction, posted materials, and staff modeling
5. Coordinating educational messages with food service staff
6. Integrating agriculture and nutrition concepts through the culinary arts program

#### **VII. Nutrition Standards and Guidelines**

The AEP will work closely with its Food Service Manager to offer nutritious and appealing meals.

**A. School Meal Programs**

The AEP participates in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. All reimbursable meals:

- Meet USDA Nutrition Standards
- Comply with RINR
- Align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2020-2025)

**B. Eating Environment**

Meals served through federal child nutrition programs shall be served in a safe, clean, and dignified environment and include:

- Adequate time to eat (at least 20 minutes)
- Convenient access to hand washing or hand sanitizing facilities
- Access to free drinking water
- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Low-fat or fat free milk and nutritionally equivalent non-dairy alternatives
- Whole grain-rich foods, in accordance with USDA requirements.

**C. Foods Sold to Students**

Any foods sold during the school day must meet USDA Smart Snacks in School Standards and Rhode Island General Laws §16-21-7. Competitive food sales generally do not occur due to facility restrictions.

**D. Foods Provided but Not Sold**

Foods provided during the school day shall promote healthy eating, comply with Smart Snacks standards when practicable, and meet food safety and allergy requirements. Food shall not be used or withheld as punishment.

**E. Foods Safety and Security**

All food service operations comply with state and local safety and sanitation regulations and are limited to authorized personnel.

**F. Food Service Staff Training:**

Qualified nutrition professionals shall administer the meal program. Food service staff shall meet all USDA Professional Standards for Child Nutrition Professionals and participate in required training and professional development. Training shall include, but is not limited to:

- Food safety and sanitation
- Nutrition standards and meal pattern requirements
- Allergen awareness and accommodation
- Facility-specific safety and security protocols

The Food Service Manager shall ensure that all food service staff receive adequate training and that required professional development hours are documented in accordance with USDA requirements.

**G. Peanut and Tree Nut Allergy**

In accordance with Rhode Island General Laws §16-21-31 and §16-21-32, the AEP shall implement procedures to protect students with peanut and tree nut allergies. The facility operates as a peanut- and tree nut-free environment.

Individual Health Care Plans (IHCPs) shall guide allergy management, staff training, communication, and emergency response. All relevant personnel shall be informed of and trained in accordance with each IHCP, as appropriate.

**VIII. Food and Beverage Marketing**

In accordance with HHFKA and Rhode Island General Laws §16-21-7.1, all school-based food and beverage marketing will be consistent with the AEP's nutrition education and health promotion goals. Marketing during the school day is limited to items meeting nutrition standards. Examples include posters, signage, and curriculum materials. Due to facility restrictions, marketing is expected to be minimal.

**IX. School/Classroom/Birthday Celebrations**

In recognition of the therapeutic and rehabilitative nature of the program, limited food-centered celebrations may occur under controlled conditions and through approved food service vendors, consistent with safety, nutrition, and facility security requirements.

Consistent with USDA Local School Wellness Policy requirements, this section establishes standards for foods and beverages provided but not sold to students during the school day, including classroom activities, celebrations, and special events.

In consideration of WSCC framework, celebrations support social-emotional wellness while maintaining safety and nutrition standards, promoting inclusivity, and reinforcing healthy behaviors. Food or beverages are not used as incentives or withheld as punishment. Exceptions may be permitted when food is identified as essential through a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

**1. Classroom and School Celebrations:**

- The distribution of candy by students, faculty and staff is prohibited in the classroom and in the facility.
- Classroom and school celebrations will not be centered on food, except if the food items are part of a curriculum-related activity and only with prior approval of the school Principal.
- Principals may grant two to three annual exceptions for a school-wide celebrations. All approved exceptions shall be documented and submitted in a report to RIDE at the end of the school year.

**2. Birthday Celebrations:**

- Birthday celebrations occur once per month, at the end of the month, to honor all youth whose birthdays occurred during that month.
- Students are provided with a slice of cake, purchased through the state-approved food vendor ordering system.
- All birthday foods are prepared, stored, and served in accordance with Rhode Island Department of Health food safety standards and RIDE nutrition guidelines.

- Celebrations shall accommodate dietary restrictions, food allergies, and cultural considerations.

**3. Student Achievement Celebrations:**

The AEP recognizes significant academic milestones, including students earning a GED or high school diploma, to reinforce achievement and foster a positive learning environment.

- Students achieving these milestones may be honored with a prepared meal, provided by the culinary arts program or another approved food service vendor.
- All meals comply with Rhode Island food safety standards and RIDE nutrition requirements.

**4. Inclusivity and Safety:**

- Alternative options (e.g., non-food items) may be provided for students with dietary restrictions, food allergies, or cultural considerations.
- Staff will supervise all celebrations to ensure safe food handling, equitable participation, and compliance with facility safety and security protocols.

**X. Physical Education and Physical Activity**

The AEP recognizes physical education and physical activity as essential components of student wellness, academic engagement, stress reduction, and emotional regulation.

Physical education is provided in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws §16-22-4 and the Rhode Island Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs (216-RICR-20-10-4) and is taught by qualified RIDE-certified instructors.

Consistent with the WSCC framework and current National Physical Education Standards, the AEP shall provide physical education and physical activity opportunities that are:

- Developmentally appropriate
- Inclusive and adaptable to individual student needs
- Designed to support both physical and mental wellness
- Supervised and comply with facility safety and security protocols
- Never withheld as punishment, except when limitations are required for safety or security

**Goals:**

1. Provide regular opportunities for physical activity during the school day within facility security guidelines
2. Encourage structured physical activity such as physical education, fitness routines, or movement-based breaks
3. Support activities that promote stress reduction, emotional regulation, and overall well-being
4. Ensure physical activity opportunities are inclusive and adapted as needed.

**A. Physical Education**

Physical education instruction shall be informed by the Rhode Island Physical Education Framework and the current SHAPE America National Standards &

Grade-Level Outcomes for K–12 Physical Education, where feasible. The AEP shall provide program that:

- Aligns with state standards and national best practices
- Is taught by licensed and appropriately qualified staff
- Emphasizes participation, fitness, and wellness
- Exposes students to a wide variety of physical activities
- Teaches physical skills to help maintain a lifetime of health and fitness
- Encourages self-monitoring and personal goal setting
- Individualizes the intensity of activities to meet students' needs
- Emphasizes effort and personal improvement over performance outcomes
- Serves as active, positive role models for students
- Introduces developmentally appropriate health-related fitness assessments

#### **B. Physical Activity Opportunities**

Students shall have opportunities for physical activity during and, when feasible, after the school day. Activities shall be developmentally appropriate, supervised and safe, and support physical, emotional, and mental wellness. Opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Movement-based breaks
- Recreational activities
- Additional physical activity through approved partnerships with community organizations (e.g., sports programming, clinics, skill-building sessions)

Additionally, the program shall:

- Provide adequate space, equipment, and comply with all safety standards
- Discourage waivers for physical education; students may only be exempt from participating in physical education class with written physician documentation
- Offer annual professional development for physical education staff to support best practices, adaptation to student needs, and safety compliance

#### **XI. Mental Health Awareness, Services, and Support**

The AEP recognizes mental and social-emotional health as essential to student success. To foster a positive learning environment that prioritizes mental health, the AEP shall implement measures to prioritize mental health through:

- Providing access to counseling and mental health supports
- Implementing trauma-informed practices
- Promoting mental health awareness and stigma reduction
- Coordinating with facility and community partners, as appropriate
- Maintaining confidentiality in accordance with professional and legal standards

The school supports a comprehensive approach to student wellness that may include:

- Social-emotional learning and behavioral support programs
- Mental health counseling and support services

- Restorative practices and positive behavior interventions
- Health screenings or referrals as permitted by the facility.

## **XII. Staff Wellness**

Consistent with Rhode Island General Laws §16-21-28, the AEP shall promote health and wellness activities to support a healthy lifestyle for all employees by:

- Encouraging all staff to improve their own personal health and wellness
- Providing access to wellness information, resources, and support programs
- Supporting staff in improving personal health and well-being
- Encouraging staff to model healthy behaviors for students
- Enhancing staff morale and engagement in wellness initiatives
- Building staff commitment to promoting student health supporting a healthy school environment

## **XIII. Implementation, Monitoring, Assessment, and Reporting**

The AEP shall implement, monitor, assess, and report on this Wellness Policy in accordance with USDA Local School Wellness Policy Final Rule and in alignment with WSCC framework.

### **Wellness Leadership and Responsibility**

The Wellness Coordinator is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy. All school improvement plans shall include a goal to support the implementation of this Wellness Policy. This policy and any proposed updates will be posted and accessible on the school website.

### **Public Involvement and Updates**

Consistent with USDA requirements, the AEP shall permit participation by the school community and the general public in the development, review, and revision of the Wellness Policy to the extent permitted by facility safety, security, and confidentiality policies. Stakeholders may include:

- Parents or guardians
- Students, as appropriate
- School food authority representatives
- Physical education teachers
- School health professionals
- School administrators
- Wellness Committee members
- Community representatives, where feasible.

The AEP shall inform the public annually about the content of the wellness policy, progress toward meeting its goals, and results of the triennial assessment, consistent with facility and confidentiality policies.

### **Policy Review and Updates**

The Wellness Policy shall be reviewed and updated as required by law and as necessary to reflect changes in federal or state regulations, national recommendations, and assessment findings.

### **Triennial Assessment**

At least once every three years, the AEP shall conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Wellness Policy to evaluate:

- Compliance with the Wellness Policy
- Progress toward stated goals
- Alignment with model wellness policies

Assessment results shall be documented and made available to the public consistent with facility security requirements.

### **Documentation and Recordkeeping**

All school Principals must complete a Health & Wellness Report at the end of each school year and include documentation of all activities that are waived in relation to this policy. The Wellness Coordinator (Principal/Special Education Director) will provide RIDE with an annual implementation report.

In accordance with USDA administrative review requirements, the AEP shall retain documentation including:

- The current Wellness Policy
- Documentation of public notifications and access
- Wellness leadership designation
- Triennial assessments
- Documentation of policy review and updates

## **XIV. Policy Adoption and Review**

- Policy Adopted: 12/29/2025
  - *Adapted from the Cranston Public Schools Wellness Policy, and the North Providence School Department Health and Wellness Policy*
- Review Cycle: At least every three years or as required by law

### **References:**

1. Rhode Island General Laws, Title 16: Education  
<https://webserver.rilegislature.gov/Statutes/>
2. Rhode Island Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs (216-RICR-20-10-4)  
[https://rules.sos.ri.gov/Regulations/part/216-20-10-4?reg\\_id=11495](https://rules.sos.ri.gov/Regulations/part/216-20-10-4?reg_id=11495)
3. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025  
[https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/Dietary\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_Americans-2020-2025.pdf](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans-2020-2025.pdf)
4. Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/whole-school-community-child/about/index.html>
5. SHAPE America: National Health Education Standards  
<https://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/health/new-he-standards.aspx#standards>
6. SHAPE America: National Physical Education Standards  
<https://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/pe/new-pe-standards.aspx#standards>
7. USDA Local School Wellness Policy Final Rule Summary  
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/DGARuleFinalSummary5.2.24.pdf>
8. USDA Local School Wellness Policy Guidance  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/wellness-policy>