



## PROGRAM POLICIES

### CHNY-PGM-9: Wellness Policy

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Affected: Covenant House New York Date Issued: 5/14/2021

Issued by: Office of the Chief Executive Officer Date Revised: 7/17/2025

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Covenant House New York (CHNY) provides an environment that promotes and protects youth's health, well-being, and ability to learn and succeed by supporting healthy eating, physical activity, and their emotional well-being.

II. Policy:

It is the policy of CHNY to provide all youth with opportunities, support, and encouragement to regularly partake in programming that promotes their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Through nutrition and physical education workshops, it is the goal of CHNY to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, as well as promote positive development in the following areas: socialization skills, respect of self and others, cultural awareness, stress management, leadership and collaboration, and using leisure time constructively. Consistent with relevant nutritional standards, youth have access to a variety of nutritious and appealing foods in a clean, safe, and pleasant environment.

III. Procedure:

**A. Physical Activity Opportunities**

1. CHNY encourages all youth to engage in physical pursuits by providing group physical fitness activities, as well as educational materials and programming on the benefits of physical activity. CHNY may also provide youth with gym memberships, when available.
2. CHNY's Youth Development Department seeks to use volunteers, whenever possible, to offer unique physical activities that may include aerobics, yoga, boxing, etc., either on-site or at another location. The Youth Development Department informs youth when any of these opportunities arise.

**B. Emotional Well-Being**

1. CHNY's Mental Health Department provides individual and group mental health services to support the emotional well-being of the youth and the dependent children of youth in our care.
2. Youth Development staff:
  - a. Offer youth sports, cultural, and other recreational activities to promote emotional well-being and socialization with other youth to build respect for self and others, leadership and collaboration skills, and other benefits;



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- b. Involve youth in other organizations' events that serve different populations to understand the needs of others and interact with different age groups; and
- c. Provide youth opportunities to experience outings and events at places such as theaters, museums, amusement parks, and local sports organizations (e.g., Mets, Yankees) so youth can experience different and various activities and discern what interests them.

### C. Nutrition

1. CHNY provides meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program (NSLP) that:
  - a. Meet relevant nutritional standards, including, but not limited to:
    - i. Offering a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, and a meat/meat alternative;
    - ii. Serving only reduced-fat (1%) and fat-free milk as well as nutritionally-equivalent, non-dairy alternatives (as defined by USDA);
    - iii. Guaranteeing that all meal components will meet minimum quantities and be within the calorie and sodium range for the age group of youth served;
    - iv. Having less than 10% of calories from saturated fat, and have no trans fat; and
    - v. Moderating food serving portions to a standard portion size based on the food item to control over-eating and waste.
  - b. Be appealing and attractive to youth;
  - c. Be culturally representative;
  - d. Offer opportunities for youth to provide input and feedback on offerings; and
  - e. Be served in clean and pleasant settings.
2. Fresh drinking water is available to all youth at mealtimes and throughout program spaces.
3. Snacks must be healthy and include fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat dairy, and lean protein foods.
4. CHNY staff may not offer food as a reward or restrict food as a punishment.
5. CHNY hosts special dinners to celebrate most major holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Food served at these events must follow the standards served at any meal, but some of the food items will reflect the holiday (e.g., turkey on Thanksgiving), and additional choices may be offered.

### D. Wellness Promotion

1. CHNY aims to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating, physical activity, and emotional well-being for our youth by:
  - a. Promoting fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat, and fat-free dairy products;
  - b. Offering regular nutrition education workshops on topics such as: MyPlate, shopping for nutritious food within a budget, reading a food label, and planning nutritious meals to enhance life skills and prepare for self-sufficiency;



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- c. Organizing meetings between staff (often Health Center and/or Nutrition staff) and youth to promote understanding of the importance of healthy food intake and physical exercise to maintain their health;
  - d. Offering workshops on health and social topics relative to youth concerns, such as HIV, gangs, recognizing abuse, and voting.
2. A Youth Development activities calendar is shared monthly, listing the nutritional, physical, and emotional growth activities available to youth for the month.

### **E. Monitoring, Policy Review, and Policy Awareness**

1. Monitoring
  - a. The Compliance Department, in collaboration with the Food Services and Youth Development Departments, will ensure compliance with established nutrition, physical activity, and emotional wellness policies through the planned activities contained in the Youth Development activities calendar.
  - b. The Director of Food and Nutrition Services and food service staff will ensure compliance with nutrition policies.
2. Policy Review

The Compliance Department will review this policy, as needed, to evaluate how the nutrition, physical, and emotional well-being procedures and program elements are meeting the needs of the youth residing in our programs. If changes are necessary, this policy will be revised and changes will be implemented.
3. Policy Awareness

CHNY staff and youth will be provided with information related to this wellness policy through memos, meetings, handbooks, newsletters, and/or posters.