

The Orion House Wellness Policy

Revised 9.20.21

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The Orion House Wellness Policy

Preamble

The Orion House is committed to the optimal development of every resident. The house believes that for residents to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental and social success, we need to create positive, safe and health-promoting learning environments at every level, in every setting.

Research shows that two components, good nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive resident outcomes. For example, student participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) House Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism and better performance on cognitive tasks.^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7} Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables and dairy products, is associated with lower grades among residents.^{8,9,10} In addition, students who are physically active through physical activity breaks, high-quality physical education and extracurricular activities – do better academically.^{11,12,13,14} Finally, there is evidence that adequate hydration is associated with better cognitive performance.^{15,16,17}

This policy outlines the house's approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all residents to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the house day while minimizing commercial distractions. Specifically, this policy establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- Residents in the house have access to healthy foods throughout the day – both through house meals and other foods available in the house– in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards;
- Residents receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors;
- Residents have opportunities to be physically active throughout the day-afterschool school, weekends and vacations;
- The staff engage in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote resident wellness;
- The staff are encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of house;
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of the house in creating continuity between house and other settings for residents and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits; and
- The Orion House establishes and maintains an infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about and monitoring of the policy and its established goals and objectives.

This policy applies to all staff and residents. Specific measurable goals and outcomes are identified within each section below.

I. House Wellness Committee

Committee Role and Membership

The Orion House will convene a representative Orion House wellness committee (OHWC) that meets at least four times per year to establish goals for and oversee house health and safety policies and programs, including development, implementation and periodic review and update of this house’s wellness policy

The OHWC membership will represent a wide variety of members and include (to the extent possible), but not be limited to: parents and caregivers; residents; food service director; therapeutic recreation coordinator; Independent Living Instructors; health professionals [e.g., nurses, physicians, dentists, health educators, and other allied health personnel who provide house health services], and mental health and social services staff [e.g., house counselors, psychologists, social workers, or psychiatrists]; house administrators (e.g. program director, residential supervisor), house board members; health professionals (e.g., dietitians, doctors, nurses, dentists); and the general public. When possible, membership will also include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education coordinators (SNAP-EDEDSNAP-Ed). To the extent possible, the OHWC will reflect the diversity of the community.

Leadership

The Executive Director will convene the OHWC and facilitate development of and updates to the wellness policy, and will ensure the house’s compliance with the policy.

Danielle Paranto, Executive Director, principal@granitehillhouse.org

Name	Title / Relationship to the House	Email address	Role on Committee
Danielle Paranto	Executive Director	principal@granitehillschool.org	Menu Planning
Melanie Gioioso	Director	mgioioso@orionhouse.org	Oversight of wellness goals implementation
Michelle Parker	Treatment Coordinator	michelle@orionhouse.org	Nutritional Counseling and networking
Barbara Bishop	Family and Resident Worker	Barbara@orionhouse.org	Nutritional counseling
Trevor Fratzel	Food Service Coordinator	vickie@orionhouse.org	Menu Planning

II. Wellness Policy Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability and Community Engagement

Implementation Plan

The Orion House will develop and maintain a plan for implementation to manage and coordinate the execution of this wellness policy. The plan delineates roles, responsibilities, actions and timelines specific to the house; and includes information about who will be responsible to make what change, by how much, where and when; as well as specific goals and objectives for nutrition standards for all foods and beverages available in the house, food and beverage marketing, nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, physical education and other house-based activities that promote resident wellness.

This wellness policy and the progress reports can be found at: Orionhouse.org

Recordkeeping

The Orion House will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy at 139 Elm St, in The Orion House building. Documentation maintained in this location will include but will not be limited to:

- The written wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating that the policy has been made available to the public;
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the Local House Wellness Policy; including an indication of who is involved in the update and methods the house uses to make stakeholders aware of their ability to participate on the OHWC;
- Documentation to demonstrate compliance with the annual public notification requirements;
- The most recent assessment on the implementation of the local house wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating the most recent assessment on the implementation of the Local House Wellness Policy has been made available to the public.

Annual Notification of Policy

The Orion House will actively inform families and the public each year of basic information about this policy, including its content, any updates to the policy and implementation status. The Orion House will make this information available via the house website and/or house wide communications. The Orion House will provide as much information as possible about the house nutrition environment. This will include a summary of the house's events or activities related to wellness policy implementation. Annually, The Orion House will also publicize the name and contact information of the staff leading and coordinating the committee, as well as information on how the public can get involved with the house wellness committee.

Triennial Progress Assessments

At least once every three years, The Orion House will evaluate compliance with the wellness policy to assess the implementation of the policy and include:

- The extent to which OH in compliance with the wellness policy;

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- The extent to which the house's wellness policy compares to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's model wellness policy; and
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of the house's wellness policy.

The position/person responsible for managing the triennial assessment and contact information is

Danielle Paranto, Executive Director principal@granitehillhouse.org

The OHWC will monitor the houses' compliance with this wellness policy.

The Orion House will actively notify households/families of the availability of the triennial progress report.

Revisions and Updating the Policy

The OHWC will update or modify the wellness policy based on the results of the School Health Index and triennial assessments and/or as OH's priorities change; community needs change; wellness goals are met; new health science, information, and technology emerges; and new Federal or state guidance or standards are issued. **The wellness policy will be assessed and updated as indicated at least every three years, following the triennial assessment.**

Community Involvement, Outreach and Communications

The Orion House is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy. OH will actively communicate ways in which representatives of OHWC and others can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the wellness policy through a variety of means. OH will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to house meals and compliance with house meal standards, availability of child nutrition programs and how to apply, and a description of and compliance with Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. The Orion House will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on The Orion House's website, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents, to ensure that all families are actively notified of the content of, implementation of, and updates to the wellness policy, as well as how to get involved and support the policy. OH will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community, and accomplished through means similar to other ways that The Orion House is communicating important house information with parents.

The Orion House will actively notify the public about the content of or any updates to the wellness policy annually, at a minimum. OH will also use these mechanisms to inform the community about the availability of the annual and triennial reports.

III. Nutrition

House Meals

The Orion House is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; that are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams *trans* fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meeting the nutrition needs of residents within their calorie requirements. The house meal program aims to improve the diet and health of residents, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating

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patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

Orion House participates in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP). OH also operates additional nutrition-related programs and activities including: *house gardens and culinary courses*. OH is committed to offering house meals and snacks through the NSLP and SBP programs, and other applicable Federal child nutrition programs, that:

- Are accessible to all residents;
- Are appealing and attractive to children;
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations.
- Promote healthy food and beverage choices using at least ten of the following [Smarter Lunchroom techniques](#):
 - Whole fruit options are displayed in attractive bowls or baskets (instead of chaffing dishes or hotel pans).
 - Sliced or cut fruit is available daily.
 - Daily fruit options are displayed in a location in the line of sight and reach of residents.
 - All available vegetable options have been given creative or descriptive names.
 - Daily vegetable options are bundled into all grab-and-go meals available to residents.
 - All staff members, especially those serving, have been trained to politely prompt residents to select and consume the daily vegetable options with their meal.
 - White milk is placed in front of other beverages in all coolers.
 - Alternative entrée options (e.g., salad bar, yogurt parfaits, etc.) are highlighted on posters or signs within all service and dining areas.
 - A reimbursable meal can be created in any service area available to residents (e.g., salad bars, snack rooms, etc.).
 - Resident surveys and taste testing opportunities are used to inform menu development, dining space decor and promotional ideas.
 - Resident artwork is displayed in the service and/or dining areas.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

All house nutrition program directors, managers and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the [USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals](#). These house nutrition personnel will refer to [USDA's Professional Standards for House Nutrition Standards website](#) to search for training that meets their learning needs.

Water

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all residents throughout the day. The Orion House provides drinking water where house meals are served during mealtimes.

Competitive Foods and Beverages

The Orion House is committed to ensuring that all foods and beverages available to residents in the house * during the school day* support healthy eating. The foods and beverages served

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outside of the house meal programs will meet the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards, at a minimum. Smart Snacks aim to improve resident health and well-being, increase consumption of healthful foods during the day and create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits.

Celebrations and Rewards

All foods offered in the house will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards including through:

1. Celebrations and parties. OH will provide a list of healthy party ideas to parents and staff, including non-food celebration ideas.
2. House snacks brought by parents. OH will provide to parents a [list of foods and beverages that meet Smart Snacks](#) nutrition standards.
3. Rewards and incentives. OH will provide relevant house staff a [list of alternative ways to reward children](#). Foods and beverages will not be used as a reward, or withheld as punishment for any reason, such as for performance or behavior.

Fundraising

Foods and beverages that meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards may be sold through fundraisers on the house campus* during the school day*. The Orion House will make available to parents and staff a list of healthy fundraising ideas.

Nutrition Promotion

Nutrition promotion and education positively influence lifelong eating behaviors by using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages, and by creating food environments that encourage healthy nutrition choices and encourage participation in the house's meal programs. Residents and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout the house, and the dining room. Nutrition promotion also includes marketing and advertising nutritious foods and beverages to residents and is most effective when implemented consistently through a comprehensive and multi-channel approach by house staff, parents, residents and the community.

The Orion House will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all residents throughout the house, as well as encourage participation in the house's meal programs. This promotion will occur through at least:

- Implementing at least ten or more evidence-based healthy food promotion techniques through the house meal programs using [Smarter Lunchroom techniques](#); and
- Ensuring 100% of foods and beverages promoted to residents meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

Nutrition Education

The Orion House will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating by all residents. Orion House will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- Is designed to provide residents with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;

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- Is part of not only Independent Living classes, but also integrated into other instruction such as cooking classes, exercise programs, consumer shopping, menu development.
- Includes enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant and participatory activities, such as cooking demonstrations or lessons, promotions, taste-testing, farm visits and house gardens;
- Promotes fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products and healthy food preparation methods;
- Emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (promotes physical activity/exercise);
- Links with house meal programs, cafeteria nutrition promotion activities, house gardens, Farm to House programs, other house foods and nutrition-related community services;
- Teaches media literacy with an emphasis on food and beverage marketing; and
- Includes nutrition education training for staff.

Essential Healthy Eating Topics in Health Education

The Orion House will include in the Independent Living curriculum a minimum of 12 of the following essential topics on healthy eating:

- Relationship between healthy eating and personal health and disease prevention
- Food guidance from [MyPlate](#)
- Reading and using FDA's nutrition fact labels
- Eating a variety of foods every day
- Balancing food intake and physical activity
- Eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grain products
- Choosing foods that are low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol and do not contain *trans* fat
- Choosing foods and beverages with little added sugars
- Eating more calcium-rich foods
- Preparing healthy meals and snacks
- Risks of unhealthy weight control practices
- Accepting body size differences
- Food safety
- Importance of water consumption
- Importance of eating breakfast
- Making healthy choices when eating at restaurants
- Eating disorders
- [The Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)
- Reducing sodium intake
- Social influences on healthy eating, including media, family, peers and culture
- How to find valid information or services related to nutrition and dietary behavior
- How to develop a plan and track progress toward achieving a personal goal to eat healthfully
- Resisting peer pressure related to unhealthy dietary behavior
- Influencing, supporting, or advocating for others' healthy dietary behavior

Food and Beverage Marketing in the House

The Orion House is committed to providing a house environment that ensures opportunities for all residents to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the day while minimizing commercial distractions. OH strives to teach residents how to make informed choices

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about nutrition, health and physical activity. These efforts will be weakened if residents are subjected to advertising on house property that contains messages inconsistent with the health information OH is imparting through nutrition education and health promotion efforts. It is the intent of OH to protect and promote resident's health by permitting advertising and marketing for only those foods and beverages that are permitted in the house, consistent with Orion House's wellness policy.

Any foods and beverages marketed or promoted to residents in the house * during the school day* will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

Food and beverage marketing is defined as advertising and other promotions in the house. Food and beverage marketing often includes an oral, written, or graphic statements made for the purpose of promoting the sale of a food or beverage product made by the producer, manufacturer, seller or any other entity with a commercial interest in the product.¹⁵ This term includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Brand names, trademarks, logos or tags, except when placed on a physically present food or beverage product or its container.
- Displays, such as on vending machine exteriors
- Corporate brand, logo, name or trademark on house equipment, such as marquees, message boards, scoreboards or backboards
- Corporate brand, logo, name or trademark on cups used for beverage dispensing, menu boards, coolers, trash cans and other food service equipment; as well as on posters, book covers, pupil assignment books or house supplies displayed, distributed, offered or sold by the house.
- Advertisements in house publications or house mailings.
- Free product samples, taste tests or coupons of a product, or free samples displaying advertising of a product.

IV. Physical Activity

Children and adolescents should participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. A substantial percentage of residents' physical activity can be provided through the daily recreation sessions. Residents have therapeutic recreation as the foundation; physical activity before, during and after school; staff involvement and family and community engagement and the house is committed to providing these opportunities. OH will ensure that these varied physical activity opportunities are in addition to, and not as a substitute for, physical education (addressed in "Physical Education" subsection).

Physical activity during the day **will not be withheld** as punishment for any reason. *This does not include participation on sports teams that have specific academic requirements.*

To the extent practicable, OH will ensure that its grounds and facilities are safe and that equipment is available to residents to be active. OH will conduct necessary inspections and repairs.

Physical Education

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The Orion House will provide residents with physical activity, using an age-appropriate, physical education curriculum consistent with national and state standards for physical education. The physical education sessions will promote the benefits of a physically active lifestyle and will help residents develop skills to engage in lifelong healthy habits, as well as incorporate essential health education concepts. The curriculum will support the essential components of physical education.

All residents will be provided equal opportunity to participate in recreational sessions. OH will make appropriate accommodations to allow for equitable participation for all residents and will adapt recreational and equipment as necessary.

The Orion House's physical education program will promote resident physical fitness through individualized fitness and activity assessments.

Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education

The Orion House residents will be instructed on the following topics through the Independent Living courses that are offered:

- The physical, psychological, or social benefits of physical activity
- How physical activity can contribute to a healthy weight
- How physical activity can contribute to the academic learning process
- How an inactive lifestyle contributes to chronic disease
- Health-related fitness, that is, cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, and body composition
- Differences between physical activity, exercise and fitness
- Phases of an exercise session, that is, warm up, workout and cool down
- Overcoming barriers to physical activity
- Decreasing sedentary activities, such as TV watching
- Opportunities for physical activity in the community
- Preventing injury during physical activity
- Weather-related safety, for example, avoiding heat stroke, hypothermia and sunburn while being physically active
- How much physical activity is enough, that is, determining frequency, intensity, time and type of physical activity
- Developing an individualized physical activity and fitness plan
- Monitoring progress toward reaching goals in an individualized physical activity plan
- Dangers of using performance-enhancing drugs, such as steroids
- Social influences on physical activity, including media, family, peers and culture
- How to find valid information or services related to physical activity and fitness
- How to influence, support, or advocate for others to engage in physical activity
- How to resist peer pressure that discourages physical activity.

Active Academics

When providing instruction to Orion House residents, Instructors will incorporate movement and kinesthetic learning approaches into subject instruction when possible and do their part to limit sedentary behavior during the school day.

The Orion House will support these instructors incorporating physical activity and employing kinesthetic learning approaches into classes by providing annual professional development opportunities and resources, including information on leading activities, activity options, as well as making available background material on the connections between learning and movement.

Instructors will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the residents whenever feasible.

Before and After School Activities

The Orion House supports opportunities for residents to participate in physical activity either before and/or after the school day (or both) through a variety of methods. OH will encourage residents to be physically active before and after school by: providing information on local sports team and extracurricular activities, promoting local and community based-activities, seeking opportunities in their home communities.

V. Other Activities that Promote Resident Wellness

The Orion House will integrate wellness activities across the entire house setting, not just in the dining room. OH will coordinate and integrate other initiatives related to physical activity, physical education, nutrition and other wellness components so all efforts are complementary, not duplicative, and work towards the same set of goals and objectives promoting resident well-being, optimal development and strong educational outcomes.

The Orion House will coordinate content across independent living areas that promote resident health, such as teaching nutrition concepts in Independent Living, with consultation provided by the Food Service Coordinator.

All efforts related to obtaining federal, state or association recognition for efforts, or grants/funding opportunities for healthy house environments will be coordinated with and complementary of the wellness policy, including but not limited to ensuring the involvement of the OHWC.

All house-sponsored events will adhere to the wellness policy guidelines. All house-sponsored wellness events will include physical activity and healthy eating opportunities when appropriate.

Community Partnerships

The Orion House will work to develop relationships with community partners (e.g., hospitals, universities/colleges, local businesses, SNAP-Ed providers and coordinators, etc.) in support of this wellness policy's implementation. Existing and new community partnerships and sponsorships will be evaluated to ensure that they are consistent with the wellness policy and its goals.

Community Health Promotion and Family Engagement

The Orion House will promote to parents/caregivers, families, and the general community the benefits of and approaches for healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school year. Families will be informed and invited to participate in house-sponsored activities and will receive information about health promotion efforts.

As described in the "Community Involvement, Outreach, and Communications" subsection, OH will use electronic mechanisms (e.g., email or displaying notices on The Orion House's website), as well as non-electronic mechanisms, (e.g., newsletters, presentations to parents or sending information home to parents), to ensure that all families are actively notified of opportunities to participate in house-sponsored activities and receive information about health promotion efforts.

Staff Wellness and Health Promotion

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The OHWC will have a staff wellness subcommittee that focuses on staff wellness issues, identifies and disseminates wellness resources and performs other functions that support staff wellness in coordination with human resources staff. The subcommittee leader's name is ___ Danielle Paranto _____.

The Orion House will implement strategies to support staff in actively promoting and modeling healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Examples of strategies the house will use, as well as specific actions staff members can take, include: team building activities, scheduling walking meetings, building a walking path for staff members, scheduling staff retreats.. The Orion House promotes staff member participation in health promotion programs and will support programs for staff members on healthy eating/weight management that are accessible and free or low-cost.

Professional Learning

When feasible, The Orion House will offer annual professional learning opportunities and resources for staff to increase knowledge and skills about promoting healthy behaviors in the house (e.g., increasing the use of kinesthetic teaching approaches or incorporating nutrition lessons into daily living classes). Professional learning will help OH staff understand the connections between academics and health and the ways in which health and wellness are integrated into ongoing house reform or academic improvement plans/efforts.

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