



NM Youth ChalleNGe Academy Wellness Policy

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NM Youth ChalleNGe Academy Wellness Policy

[Note: This “Basic” district-level wellness policy meets the minimum Federal standards for local school wellness policy implementation under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Healthy Schools Program “Bronze”-level recognition criteria, and minimum best practice standards accepted in the education and public health fields.]

Preamble

The NM Youth ChalleNGe Academy (NMYCA) is committed to the optimal development of every cadet. The academy believes that for cadets 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, throughout the school year.

Research shows that two components, good nutrition and physical activity before, during, and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. For example, student participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) School 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 students.^{8,9,10} In addition, students who are physically active through active transport to and from school, 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

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

- NMYCA cadets have access to healthy foods in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards;
- Cadets receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors;
- Cadets have opportunities to be physically active before, during, and after school;
- Cadets engage in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote student wellness;
- Cadre staff are encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school;
- The community and the parents are engaged in supporting the work of the academy in creating continuity between academy and other settings for cadets and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits; and
- The NMYCA 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 cadets and staff.

I. School Wellness Committee

Committee Role and Membership

The NMYCA will convene a wellness committee that meets at least four times per year to establish goals for and oversee academy health and safety policies and programs, including development, implementation, and periodic review and update wellness policy.

The Wellness Committee membership will consist of the Commandant, Programs Officer; parents; cadets; cadre; representatives of the academy nutrition program (ex., nurse/medical assistant; lead cook; physical education teachers; teachers).

Leadership

The Commandant will convene the Wellness Committee and facilitate development of and updates to the wellness policy, and will ensure compliance with the policy.

The name(s), title(s), and contact information of this/these individual(s) is:

Name	Title	Email address	Role
Jay Chase	Nutrition Program Director	JayD.Chase@state.nm.us	Chairman
John Sisneros	Lead Counselor	JohnM.Sisneros@state.nm.us	Co-Chairman
Dale Smith	Education Coordinator	DaleR.Smith@state.nm.us	Member
Raymond Pena	Deputy Commandant	RaymondA.Pena@state.nm.us	Member
Vicky Slinkard	Registered Nurse	VickyL.Slinkard@state.nm.us	Member

Wellness Policy Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability, and Community Engagement

Implementation Plan

The NMYCA 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 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 on the school campus, nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, physical education, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. It is recommended that the academy use the [Healthy Schools Program online tools](#) to complete a school level assessment based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's School Health Index, create an action plan that fosters implementation, and generate an annual progress report.

Recordkeeping

The academy will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy at the Budget Officer's office and/or on the academy's central computer network. Documentation maintained in this location will include but will not be limited to:

- The written wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating compliance with community involvement requirements, including (1) Efforts to actively solicit committee membership from the required stakeholder groups; and (2) These groups' participation in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the wellness policy;
- Documentation of annual policy progress reports; and
- Documentation of the triennial assessment of the policy;
- Documentation demonstrating compliance with public notification requirements, including: (1) Methods by which the wellness policy, annual progress reports, and triennial assessments are made available to the public; and (2) Efforts to actively notify families about the availability of wellness policy.

Annual Progress Reports

The NMYCA will compile and publish an annual report to share basic information about the wellness policy and report on the progress of the academy in meeting wellness goals. This annual report will be published around the same time each year in December. This report will include, but is not limited to:

- The website address for the wellness policy and/or how the public can receive/access a copy of the wellness policy;
- A description of the academy's progress in meeting the wellness policy goals;
- A summary of events or activities related to wellness policy implementation;
- The name, position title, and contact information of the designated policy leader(s) identified in Section I; and
- Information on how individuals and the public can get involved with the Wellness Committee.

The annual report will be available on the NMYCA website.

The NMYCA will actively notify households/families of the availability of the annual report.

- The NMYCA will track, analyze, and report on any correlations between improvements in health-promoting environments with education outcomes, such as absenteeism, disciplinary referrals, test scores, average grades, or health measures such as consumption of whole grains, fruits, or vegetables through the school meal programs or BMI, or psycho-social measures such as self-reported “connectedness,” or other school climate measures.
- The academy will also track and annually report other related information, such as findings from food safety inspections, aggregate participation in school meals programs, and other such information, as feasible.

Triennial Progress Assessments

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

- The extent to which the NMYCA is in compliance with the wellness policy;
- The extent to which NMYCA wellness policy compares to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s model wellness policy; and
- A description of progress made in attaining the goals of the academy’s wellness policy.

The position/person responsible for managing the triennial assessment and contact information is Nutrition Program Director Jay Chase, at (575) 347-7602.

NMYCA will actively notify households/families of the availability of the triennial progress report.

Revisions and Updating the Policy

The committee will update or modify the wellness policy based on the results of the annual progress reports and triennial assessments, and/or as academy 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 NMYCA is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy. The academy will actively communicate ways in which representatives of the committee and others can participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the wellness policy through a variety of means appropriate for the academy. The academy will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to school meals and compliance with school 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 academy will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on the academy’s website, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as 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. The NMYCA will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community, and accomplished through means similar to other

ways that the academy is communicating other important information with parents.

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

II. Nutrition

School Meals

The NMYCA is committed to serving healthy meals to cadets, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and zero grams *trans* fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meet the nutrition needs of youth within their calorie requirements. The meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of youth, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns, and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

NMYCA participates in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the After-School Snack Program (ASSP). NMYCA is committed to offering school meals through the NSLP and SBP programs, and other applicable Federal child nutrition programs, that:

- Are accessible to all cadets;
- Are appealing and attractive to youth;
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations. (The NMYCA offers reimbursable school meals that meet [USDA nutrition standards](#).)
- Promote healthy food and beverage choices using from the following [Smarter Lunchroom techniques](#):
 - Sliced or cut fruit is available daily
 - White milk is placed in front of other beverages in the coolers
 - Student surveys and taste testing opportunities are used to inform menu development, dining space decor, and promotional ideas

Food Allergies and Special Diets

Medical diagnosis of individual student allergies is collected upon enrollment in NMYCA. The Youth Challenge medic notifies the food service provider of any student food allergies or special dietary needs, whether temporary or long-term, for students enrolled in the academy in order to accommodate student needs and ensure their health and safety by making appropriate modifications to individual meals.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

All school nutrition program personnel and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the [USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals](#). These school nutrition personnel will refer to [USDA's Professional Standards for School 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 cadets throughout the day. The NMYCA will make drinking water available in the dining facility (Chow Hall) where meals are served during mealtimes. In addition, cadets will be allowed to carry approved water bottles (canteens) filled with only water on them throughout the day.

Competitive Foods and Beverages

The NMYCA is committed to ensuring that all foods and beverages available to students on the school campus during the school day to support healthy eating. Smart Snacks will aim to improve student health and well-being, increase consumption of healthful foods during the school day, and create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits.

To support healthy food choices and improve student health and well-being, all snacks and beverages will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards.

Celebrations and Rewards

All foods offered on the NMYCA campus will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, including through:

- Rewards and incentives. Foods and beverages will not be used as a reward, or withheld as punishment for any reason, such as for performance or behavior.

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 school meal programs. Cadets and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout campus, classrooms, and the Chow Hall. Nutrition promotion also includes marketing and advertising nutritious foods and beverages to cadets and is most effective when implemented consistently through a comprehensive and multi-channel approach by staff and teachers, parents, cadets, and the community.

The NMYCA will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all cadets throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. This promotion will occur through at least:

- Implementing evidence-based healthy food promotion techniques through the school meal programs such as [Smarter Lunchroom techniques](#); and
- Promoting foods and beverages that meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Additional possible promotion techniques that the District and individual schools may use are available at www.healthiergeneration.org/smartsnacks.

Nutrition Education

The NMYCA aims to teach, model, encourage, and support healthy eating by students. The academy will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that will help meet USDA standards for Child Nutrition and federal standards under Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

Essential Healthy Eating Topics in Health Education

The NMYCA will include in the health education curriculum the following essential topics on healthy eating:

- The relationship between healthy eating and personal health and disease prevention
- Food guidance from [MyPlate](#)
- Reading and using USDA's food 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

[USDA's Team Nutrition](#) provides free nutrition education and promotion materials, including standards-based nutrition education curricula and lesson plans, posters, interactive games, menu graphics, and more.

Food and Beverage Marketing in Schools

The NMYCA is committed to providing a school environment that ensures opportunities for all cadets to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. The NMYCA strives to teach cadets how to make informed choices about nutrition, health, and physical activity. These efforts will be weakened if cadets are subjected to advertising on NMYCA property that contains messages inconsistent with the health information the academy is imparting through nutrition education and health promotion efforts. It is the intent of the academy to protect and promote cadet's health, consistent with the NMYCA wellness policy.

Any foods and beverages marketed or promoted to cadets on the school campus during the school day will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

III. Physical Activity

Cadets should participate in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. A substantial percentage of cadets' physical activity can be provided through a comprehensive, school-based physical activity program that includes these components: physical education, classroom-based physical activity, and out-of-school time activities and the academy is committed to providing these opportunities. The NMYCA will participate in Active Schools (www.activeschoolsus.org) in order to successfully address all physical wellness areas.

Physical Education

The NMYCA will provide cadets with physical education, sequential physical education curriculum consistent with national and state standards for physical education. The physical education curriculum will promote the benefits of a physically active lifestyle and will help cadets develop skills to engage in lifelong healthy habits, as well as incorporate essential health education concepts (discussed in the "*Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education*" subsection).

All cadets will be provided equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes. The academy will make appropriate accommodations to allow for equitable participation for all students and will adapt physical education classes and equipment as necessary.

All cadets are required to take the equivalent of one academic year of physical education.

The academy's physical education program will promote student physical fitness through individualized fitness and activity assessments (via the [Presidential Youth Fitness Program](#) or other appropriate assessment tool) and will use criterion-based reporting for each student.

Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education

The NMYCA will include in the health education curriculum the following essential topics on physical activity.

- 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

Physical Activity Breaks

The NMYCA recognizes that cadets are more attentive and ready to learn if provided with periodic breaks when they can be physically active or stretch. Thus, cadets will be offered **periodic opportunities** to be active or to stretch throughout the day on all or most days during a typical school week. The academy recommends teachers provide short (3-5 minute) physical activity breaks to students during and between classroom time. These physical activity breaks will complement, not substitute, for physical education class and class transition periods.

The academy will provide resources and links to resources, tools, and technology with ideas for physical activity breaks. Resources and ideas are available through [USDA](#) and the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#).

Active Academics

Teachers will incorporate movement and kinesthetic learning approaches into “core” subject instruction when possible (e.g., science, math, language arts, social studies, and others) and do their part to limit sedentary behavior during the school day.

The academy will support classroom teachers incorporating physical activity and employing kinesthetic learning approaches into core subjects by providing information on leading activities, activity options, as well as making available background material on the connections between learning and movement.

Before and After School Activities

All NMYCA cadets participate in daily, organized Physical Training activities each morning. The academy offers opportunities for cadets to participate in physical activity either before and/or after the school day (or both) through a variety of methods such as sport events, stretching exercises, etc.



IV. Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness

The NMYCA will integrate wellness activities across the entire school setting, not just in the Chow Hall and physical activity facilities. The academy 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 cadet well-being, optimal development, and strong educational outcomes.

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

All academy-sponsored events will adhere to the wellness policy. All academy-sponsored wellness events will include physical activity opportunities.

Community Health Promotion and Engagement

The NMYCA 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 receive information about health promotion efforts.

Staff Wellness and Health Promotion

The Wellness Committee 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 Patrick Cruz.

The academy 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.

Appendix A: School Level Contacts

Name	Title	Email address
Tina Sisneros	NMYCA Director	TinaM.Sisneros@state.nm.us
Chris Lara	Deputy Director	ChrisR.Lara@state.nm.us
Richard Martinez	Commandant	RichardA.Martinez@state.nm.us
Dale Smith	Education Coordinator	DaleR.Smith@state.nm.us
Jay Chase	Nutrition Program Director	JayD.Chase@state.nm.us

¹ Bradley, B, Green, AC. Do Health and Education Agencies in the United States Share Responsibility for Academic Achievement and Health? A Review of 25 years of Evidence About the Relationship of Adolescents' Academic Achievement and Health Behaviors, *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2013; 52(5):523–532.

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