

## **Nutrition & Health Committee Overview**

### Nutrition & Health Committee Members:

1. Ms. Katina Sayers, Food Service Operations Manager, Committee Chair/Wellness Policy Coordinator, ksayerswalker@elmcrest.org
2. Mr. Aaron Schioppa, Residential Operations Manager, representative from Residential, aschioppa@elmcrest.org
3. Mr. Wayne Murray, Director of Support Services, representative from Administration, wmurray@elmcrest.org
4. Dr. Julius Brown, Director of Medical Services, representative from Medical Services, jbrown@elmcrest.org
5. Ms. Christine Canova, Family & Youth Specialist at the Family Support Center (FSC), Residential Staff Representative, christinecanova1@gmail.com
6. Ms. Mariea Robertson, Family & Youth Specialist at Family Support Center (FSC), Residential Staff Representative, mariearobertson28@gmail.com

### Policy on Creating Menus for Elmcrest Residents based on:

Weekly menus are created for Breakfast and Lunch based on the National School Breakfast (NSB) & Lunch program (NSLP) meal patterns. Additionally, we also consider the age of the Residents, food preference of Residents, ethnic cuisine, color of fruits and vegetables, seasonal availability of foods, as well as the MyPlate infographic for a simplistic representation of these standards. Dinners are designed based on similar patterns but with emphasis on a balanced set of nutrients: carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fats. We cycle through four 1-week menus.

### Topics of Discussion at Committee Meetings:

- Nutrition-related topics: food tasting events and in-program taste tests; new meal ideas and food components, quality and preparation of food, strategies to motivate Residents to try new food, rating of new foods, food sensitivities, weight management, cooking demonstrations in the program, meal preparation in the programs, decreasing food waste, use of bulletin board with nutrition and health-related handouts, and topics for the monthly nutrition and health newsletter for Residents and Staff.
- Physical activity-related topics: recreation therapy, walking club, weight management, and ways to build in more movement into the daily schedule of Residents.
- Staff Development topics: encouraging staff to be positive role models and ambassadors for healthy eating and physical activity (e.g., use positive language towards healthy food, encourage Residents to try new foods, recommend daily movement/activities for the Residents), receive

emails/newsletter with campus nutrition and health information, and the role(s) of the Nutrition & Health Liaisons.

## Elmcrest Children's Center Wellness Policy

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### **Subject: Elmcrest Wellness Policy**

Elmcrest Children's Center is a multi-service Residential treatment and education center that is committed to promoting and protecting the Resident's health and well-being, and ability to learn by fostering healthy eating and physical activity. Elmcrest is considered a Residential Child Care Institution (RRCI) as per the USDA guidelines.

Elmcrest has established a Nutrition & Health Committee to develop the proposed local Wellness Policy, making such recommendations for review and adoption. This committee meets once-a-month during the school year to discuss, develop, and initiate activities related to nutrition and health. The Nutrition & Health Committee includes, but not limited to, representatives from across the agency:

- Food Service
- Residential
- Medical Services
- Agency Staff who work directly with Residents
- Administration

The Nutrition & Health Committee will also assess current activities, programs, and policies related to nutrition and health at Elmcrest, and provide mechanisms for implementation, evaluation, and revision of the policy. In so doing, the Nutrition & Health committee will evaluate and make recommendations which reflect the specific needs of its population of Residents.

### **Section #1: Goals to Promote Student Wellness**

Elmcrest seeks to ensure all of its Residents obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to make nutritious food selections and enjoy life-long physical activity. To this end, Elmcrest sets forth the following goals relating to (1) nutrition education and promotion, (2) physical activity, and (3) other agency-based activities.

#### **Goal #1: Nutrition Education & Promotion**

- Elmcrest Residents attend an on-site school that is a part of the Syracuse City School District (SCSD). Health education is taught during summer school with Residents in grades 7-12. Nutrition instruction follows applicable NYS standards for Health. Health instruction is provided by the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) and two literacy instructors.
  - Nutrition Topics—Dimensions of Health, food choices and decisions, review of the USDA Myplate, and understanding food labels and ingredients.
- Elmcrest will promote and serve healthy food and beverages for all Residents based on the National School Breakfast Program (SBP) and School Lunch program (NSLP) to the maximum extent possible. Food served through these programs will meet applicable federal standards.

After school snack meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards which can be found on the USDA website.

- Elmcrest will promote this policy by encouraging and supporting healthy eating habits through various means such as informing staff of this policy, and through publication on agency website, social media, and with parents/caregivers at admission.

*Additional Provisions*

- Marketing and advertising of food and beverages is not permitted on agency property.
- Elmcrest staff are discouraged from using food as a reward or incentive in Residential programs.
- Informal Nutrition education in Residential Programs takes place through day-to-day conversations and discussion with designated Nutrition & Health Liaisons – classroom topics and skills are linked back to the Residential programs through Nutrition & Health Liaisons and other Staff, bulletin boards which are updates twice a month, special events (e.g., food taste tests with “Fun Food Fast Facts”), puzzles, in-program Sunday dinner meal development, other in-program cooking, and monthly newsletters.

Goal #2: Physical Activity

- Elmcrest Residents attend an on-site school that is a part of the Syracuse City School District (SCSD). The SCSD has a Board-approved physical Education plan on file with the New York State Education Department that meets or exceeds the requirements set forth in Section 135.4 of the Commissioner of Education’s Regulations.

*Additional Provisions*

- Beyond physical education requirements, 60 minutes of physical activity is built into the daily schedule of Programs. The use of time varies depending upon the needs of the program and activities vary by age group and season. As such, the Residents will have either indoor or outdoor recess.
- Active Transport – Residents use active transport (e.g., walking) to and from school at the start of the school day, at lunch (to and from their Residential program), and at the end of the school day.

Goal #3: Other Elmcrest-Based Activities

- Food Service Department Staff – all Food Service Department Staff (operations manager, food service director, lead cooks, prep cooks, and other support staff) will be provided with annual professional development in the areas of food and nutrition consistent with the USDA Professional Standards for State and Local Nutrition Programs

- Staff Development – when new staff are hired, they are introduced to the Federal Breakfast and Lunch program and a set of professional expectations/responsibilities to uphold these federal guidelines during meal times as it relates to the USDA Offer vs. Serve policy.
- Elmcrest will ensure that the dining areas in each Residential program have sufficient space for Residents to sit and consume meals; dining areas are clean, safe, and pleasant environments; meals are scheduled at the beginning and middle of day and dinner is served around 5 pm; Residents are given adequate time to eat healthy meals; and, Residents have access to free, safe, and refreshing water throughout the day and where meals are served.
- Food Sampling Events and In-Program Tastings – to expose Residents to new kinds of healthy and seasonal food items, the Food Service department will offer small food tasting events to Residential programs. New food items are supplemented with “Fun Food Fast Facts” that staff members read aloud to garner the interest of the Residents. Afterwards, Residents are asked to complete a short survey to rate their liking of the item. This information is aggregated and guides menu revisions. Taste events occur several times throughout the year.

## **Section #2: Nutrition Guidelines**

In an effort to encourage healthy life-long eating habits by providing foods that are high in nutrients, low in fat and added sugars, and a moderate portion size, the Food Service Department in conjunction with the Nutrition and Health Committee will recommend nutrition standards to be set for all foods and beverages available at Elmcrest.

- Nutritional Values of Foods & Beverages
  - Reimbursable school meals served at Elmcrest will at a minimum meet the program requirements and nutrition standards of the Federal Breakfast and School Lunch program.

### **Additional Provisions**

- Non-reimbursable meals (such as Dinner) retain a healthy focus by including a source of protein, carbohydrate (in the form of grains, pasta, or starchy vegetables), and other vegetables such as dinner salad. Often times these dinners are directly from the USDA website to ensure that we are serving healthy balanced meals that are low fat, low sodium, includes whole grains, dairy, and other seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- The Food Service Department will accommodate Residents with special dietary needs based on documentation received from the Medical department, as well as religious beliefs (e.g., Muslim faith).
- Elmcrest Administration is aware that Residents participate in a weekly off-campus grocery store field trip and allowed to purchase products (i.e., competitive foods and beverages) with their allowance. Residents are encouraged to make healthy

snack purchases but as such, we are aware that Residents often opt to purchase traditional junk food which is then rationed by staff.

- The Residential Program and Food Service Department encourages cooking in individual Residential Programs for Sunday dinner. This activity engages Residents in the meal planning process and supports essential life skills. Meals are reviewed by the Food Service Operations Manager and revised if necessary to ensure the meals are balanced with proteins, carbohydrates and healthy fats, and must include at least one (1) vegetable.
- Elmcrest does not sell food to Residents through vending machines. All food is purchased through the Food Service Department via requisition forms.
- Fresh fruit is always available as a snack option.
- Menus are posted in each program.

### **Section #3: Implementation & Evaluation of Wellness Policy**

Elmcrest will establish an implementation and evaluation plan for this policy in order to monitor its effectiveness and the possible need for modification over time. To this end, Elmcrest designates that the following individuals to have operational responsibility for ensuring that Elmcrest meets the goals and mandates of this policy: Food Service Operations Manager, Director of Support Services, Residential Operations Manager, and Medical personnel.

Assessments of this Wellness Policy and implementation efforts will be conducted at least every three (3) years, to help review policy compliance, assess progress, and determine areas in need of improvement. This assessment will determine: the extent to which the Agency complies with the Wellness Policy, a comparison to other model Wellness Policies, and progress made in attaining the goals of the Wellness Policy. Updates to this Wellness Policy will be kept on file as well as shared with Administration, Staff/Employees, and Parents/Caregivers upon admission.