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Dimondale Adolescent Care Facility

Wellness Policy for Clients and Staff

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Introduction

Dimondale Adolescent Care Facility recognizes the importance of good health, for both clients and staff. We realize that success, however it is measured, will be less rewarding if one isn't well enough to enjoy the benefits of his or her achievements. Most people are born with the capacity to live a long and healthy life. A healthy lifestyle doesn't just happen, however. The fact that one must be conscious of making healthy choices was recognized as early as 1240AD, when Henry de Bracton wrote his medical text, *De Legibus*. In this work, he stated that, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." The federal government and the State of California refer to a healthy lifestyle as *wellness*. Wellness, or maintenance of good health, is a set of skills that must be learned. It includes such things as good nutrition, exercise, avoiding toxic substances like drugs and tobacco, seeing a physician or therapist regularly to receive any necessary care, as well as taking the necessary precautions to avoid injuries.

Dimondale is committed to the health of our clients and staff. Pursuant to this goal, we have provided this guideline, which outlines our goals of teaching these skills to our clients, as well as providing reminders and training to our staff members. The administration has hopes that this set of policies will serve both our clients and all of our team members as a useful tool for promoting the health and welfare of all involved. We invite everyone to participate, and share with us the joy of good health!

Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle Right from the Start!

At Dimondale, we recognize that some general steps are necessary to ensure that all of our residents and staff are encouraged to live in a healthy way. We will make our commitment to good health clear to all new residents and new staff members by updating our Resident Intake Packets and New-Hire Training Materials to reflect this goal. Dimondale will also conduct quarterly wellness training for staff members during the course of regular monthly training. In addition, the residents will be required attend a monthly meeting in which healthy living and general wellness will be discussed. We will be providing information about good nutrition, avoiding injuries, reducing stress, and maintaining a healthy outlook. Our new physical activity policies will help everyone burn calories and stay fit!

Goals for Nutrition Education

The first step in living a healthy life is knowing how to do so. This begins with knowing the importance of eating the right balance of nutritious foods, and knowing how to identify how each type of food is suitable. The young women in our care may not have acquired this knowledge at home, at school, or in prior placements. Dimondale will take the necessary step of educating our clients and staff about good eating habits in the following ways:

1. Dimondale will display helpful posters provided by the USDA, as well as make accompanying materials available to residents and staff.
2. The Resident Welcome Packet will be updated with a statement about good nutrition at Dimondale, and how this might affect their diet.
3. The New Hire Training Materials will be updated to include Dimondale's policy regarding nutrition, and current staff will receive materials that outline the goals and procedures concerning nutrition, food preparation, and dietary restrictions of the residents.
4. Quarterly Wellness Training for staff members will include nutrition information.
5. Monthly Wellness Meetings for Residents will include discussions about healthy diets, include nutrition information, and instruct them as to which foods they should avoid.

Goals for Physical Activities

Over-indulgence is a favorite American pastime. Here in the United States, especially in Southern California, we are blessed with an abundance of food. Even if we strive to eat only healthy foods, chances are that we eat too much of it. As a result, many Americans are overweight. Obesity can lead to a variety of health problems, including diabetes, joint damage, and the number-one killer of Americans, heart disease. The best way to avoid becoming overweight is physical activity. Exercise has many other benefits as well, such as increased energy, improved muscle tone, and higher bone density. The benefit of exercise that is very pertinent to the goals of our residential facilities is the increased mental health and decrease in improper behavior that it should provide. Dimondale's philosophy includes the idea that healthy bodies contribute to healthy minds. Residents who expend adequate energy in physical activity should be less likely to expend that same energy in negative behavior. This contributes to the safety and well being of every client and staff member. Also, many of our residents take medication for depression and/or trouble sleeping. Frequent exercise is known to combat both depression and insomnia. It is clear, therefore, that everyone associated with our organization will benefit from the following physical activity goals:

1. Dimondale will be more consistent in enforcing our existing ban on television during the daytime. We remind staff that residents who are home because they are ill or suspended from school are required to be in their rooms. Residents who are home for other reasons can be engaged in more productive activities, such as chores, or might even play cards or

Goals for Physical Activities, continued

- other games with staff. Staff members should not be watching TV during their shift, as this distracts them from their other duties, and interferes with supervision of the residents.
2. Each resident and staff member will be encouraged to participate in at least one hour of physical activity daily.
 3. Good cardiovascular health requires three uninterrupted 20-minute sessions of demanding physical activity per week. Each facility will decide as a group how this might be achieved in an enjoyable manner, as part of the monthly wellness meetings.
 4. Dimondale will provide, as our budget and space permits, equipment and supplies designed to promote physical activities. These may include basketball hoops and/or balls, painted foursquare courts on the back patios, tetherballs, etc.
 5. One outing each week, as weather permits, will be an outdoor physical activity. This could include swimming at a community pool in the summertime, for example, or going as a group for a long walk and picnic at a local park or historical monument, such as one of the many Spanish missions in the area.

Nutrition Standards

As detailed above, Dimondale will be taking an active role in providing nutrition education to our staff and clients. Such information is only useful if it is consistently applied during our daily operations. We therefore must make every attempt to practice the behavior that we are encouraging. Every facility in our organization is provided with healthy foods and menus designed to meet all of the nutritional needs of our residents. These menus are to be followed as closely as possible. The administration realizes that our often-hectic schedules sometimes interfere with regular mealtimes, and that time constraints occasionally prohibit the preparation of a large healthy meal for as many as eight people. We remind the staff, however, that personal preferences for or against certain foods, distaste for the cooking mess, or the unwillingness to make the substantial effort required to prepare such a meal are not considered suitable reasons to make substitutions or skip a meal. Preparation of these meals is a requirement of the Child Care Counselors on duty. In addition, both our license and our program statement clearly require that the nutrition guidelines be followed. In order to ensure compliance with our nutrition standards, the following steps will be taken and/or continued.

1. Dimondale participates in a State program for schools and residential centers that uses menus, which are provided by Executive Management Services, and prepared by registered dietitians to meet USDA nutritional standards.
2. The menus are designed to provide nutritious meals in the proper portions, therefore it is essential that portion sizes be managed properly. Residents will be served meals with proper portion sizes, rather than be allowed to serve themselves buffet style. Residents with special dietary needs, *verified* food allergies, or dietary restrictions (all noted in a resident's file, or prescribed by a physician), will be supervised during mealtimes to ensure compliance with any special dietary requirements for that resident.
3. Appropriate healthy snacks are provided on the menus. Please limit snacking between meals to these schedules and foods.

Nutrition Standards, continued

4. Meal times are defined in the house schedules. Residents who miss meals due to awakening late or for other obviously avoidable reasons may have a healthy snack such as those listed on the menus. Residents who are home from school are expected to awaken and eat with the other residents, unless illness clearly prohibits it.
5. Transfat and saturated fats are to be avoided. The menus limit intake of these foods. There are usually very few fried foods on the menu. Avoid frying other foods. The Meal Coordinator will make all efforts to provide healthier oils for use in occasional frying and other preparation. Staff should remember that both butter and margarine are usually pure fat, and limit their use to a reasonable amount.
6. Many residents will spend their allowance on junk foods containing unhealthy ingredients. This behavior should be actively discouraged, but is not prohibited. Obviously, it is not the goal of Dimondale to prohibit the residents from acting like teenagers.

Proper Food Handling and Storage

Everyone knows that nutrition is important to long-term health. In the short term, however, even healthy food has the potential to make someone ill, if it is not handled and stored properly. Our licensing agency has strict standards for the proper storage of perishable food. Some of these are as follows:

1. The refrigerator shall be kept below 45 degrees Fahrenheit, but several degrees above 32 (freezing temperature).
2. The Freezer shall be kept at or below 0 degrees Fahrenheit.
3. Perishables and leftovers shall be discarded after 72 hours (three days).
4. Any knife, utensil, or surface that has come in contact with raw meat or eggs shall not be permitted to contact other food until it has been washed thoroughly.

Minimizing the Spread of Contagious Agents

Colds are a common hazard that cannot be avoided. Everyone occasionally suffers from the common cold. In close quarters like our facilities, colds spread rapidly and easily. Generally, if one resident or staff member contracts a cold, everyone else in the facility will be suffering from it soon. To limit the effects of contagion, the following steps can be taken:

1. Residents are confined to their rooms when ill. They should be provided plenty of fluids (preferably water), and easily digested food, such as soup and fruit.
2. Staff and residents who have a cold should wash their hands often, and avoid touching dishes and food.
3. Staff members who are ill should limit physical contact with the residents and other staff.

4. Anyone who is ill should remind others to keep several feet away when speaking with them.
5. Tissues, etc. that have been used by someone with a cold should be taken to the outdoor trashcan by the person who is or was ill, if possible.

Other Wellness Goals and Policies

All of the previous stated goals and policies are designed to contribute to the health and well being of everyone involved with or served by this organization. Everyone benefits from healthy residents, healthy staff members, and a healthy work environment. We believe that a few of the following ideas, actions or activities will promote a healthy lifestyle, and we welcome suggestions for improvement from all of our employees and clients.

1. Participate in an exercise program of any kind. Try to find something fun to do that involves physical activity. Do it as a group!
2. Park farther out in big lots, rather than trying to locate the closest spot. Remember, the staff is driving, not the residents.
3. The average resident gains about 24 pounds in placement. While some of this can be attributed to natural growth and maturing, most of it is a result of more food and lessened physical activity. Few teens want to gain too much weight. Encourage diet and activities that will minimize weight gain.
4. Primaries can help the residents set individual health goals. This might be a weight loss plan, less need for medication (if approved by the prescribing physician), or other more personal goals.
5. Staff members should try to set a good example for the residents. One of the primary job requirements is being a good role model. Lounging on the couch all day will not set a good example, and will likely interfere with supervision as well. Staff members should try to keep active and busy. This is usually mandatory in a home shared by six adolescents and staff.

Evaluation Goals

How will Dimondale be sure that our goal of health for everyone is being realized? A quantification plan of some kind is required. The first way to measure how well we are doing is to look at ourselves. Do we feel better, look better, or sleep better? Are we better able to handle the stresses of what we do? Only individuals can answer these questions. These are good topics for the regular wellness meetings. Share your views and experiences with others. Other ways we might measure our success are as follows:

1. State regulations already require monthly weighing of the residents, so results in this area should be easy to see. Staff can participate in the weight monitoring as well, or do it during a quick private moment if he or she is shy.
2. Check your heart rate during exercise. Healthy hearts have to pump less often. Check your pulse under the jaw with your middle finger (Don't use your index finger, it has a

strong pulse of its own). Watch the clock for thirty seconds, and see if you're making progress. Encourage the residents to participate as well.

3. Increased activity should lead to less negative behavior, and possibly less need for medication. The administration will be monitoring UIRs and resident files to see if this is occurring.
4. Keep a mental note of how the facility is running. Notify your supervisor if you notice a change for the better in any area, or if you have an idea on how to improve the health of everyone.