

Buchanan County Head Start



Where Learning is Fun!

Staff Wellness

2024 - 2025 (Updated June 2024)

Approved by PC & Board liaison – July 2024

Buchanan County Head Start's wellness goal is to sustain wellness for all BCHS staff and children. The agency has elected to focus on the eight wellness dimensions as follows: occupational, emotional, spiritual, Intellectual, physical, environmental, financial, and social.

Occupational Wellness; Occupational wellness is very important to the employee. Having a sense of satisfaction and gratification in our chosen profession is extremely important so staff can communicate values that are important and bring self-satisfaction.

Work takes up a majority of staff time and is a factor of one's overall well-being. BCHS promotes classrooms that are well equipped, safe, healthy, energizing, and inviting. Staff and children are encouraged to work together, respect others, and above all, enjoy a day of socialization and learning.

Healthy food choices are available to children and staff daily. The staff has the option of taking a lunch break in a quiet, private area. Classrooms have access to outside play areas and gyms. This allows our staff to use the areas for exercise and physical activities such as walking, running, dancing, and game playing. Staff may also wish to use this time and get some additional steps in daily. To instill quality, meet all necessary ratio numbers, and provide staff additional breaks, BCHS employ three adults per classroom. Three staff per classroom allow time to organize and work together without feeling stressed.

Individuals must discover what occupational opportunities work best for them. Some suggestions to assist in the journey to occupational wellness are listed below:

- Practice open communication and proper conflict management with your colleagues.

- Attempt to develop an open dialogue with the management team to see how one can best further their career.
- Feeling inspired or challenged.
- Work independently and with others.

Emotional wellness: Emotional wellness inspires self-care, relaxation, stress reduction and the development of inner strength. It is important to be attentive to both negative and positive feelings and be able to understand how to handle these emotions. Emotional wellness encourages one to better understand how they are feeling. Once feelings are recognized and accepted, one can begin to recognize situations that change their emotional well-being. Being emotionally well helps one to be optimistic.

- BCHS offers staff development in stress management. The agency partners with Cumberland Mountain Community Services to provide staff with guidance from a professional counselor. Workshops are provided with staff giving them the opportunity to de-stress with their peers and with professional guidance.

The program is designed so that all staff have a “go to” person with whom they can speak with to decompress. There are strong support networks throughout the agency, and opportunities are available for everyone’s voice to be heard within the program.

Annual and sick leave are a part of staff’s fringe package. These days are given to staff annually, and may be taken when needed or necessary. Staff does not have to stress concerning loss of wages when using annual/sick.

An optimistic attitude is important in order to achieve emotional wellness. Some strategies that should be practiced in order to boost one’s emotional wellness are listed below:

- Look for the positive.
- Seek and accept help from others when needed.
- Accept mistakes and learn from them for next time.
- Incorporate things you enjoy into your self-care.
- Take time to relax.
- Saying “no” when you need to without feeling guilty.

Spiritual wellness:

Spiritual wellness allows us to find a sense of purpose and meaning in life. At the same time, it allows us to appreciate life experiences. Spiritual wellness grants balance in one’s life.

BCHS recognizes that everyone's personal beliefs and values are different. The agency allows time within the classroom setting for prayer and/or meditation.

Staff can improve their spiritual wellness by doing some of the following:

- Volunteering to help others.
- Keeping a journal.
- Focusing on hobbies.
- Spending time in nature.
- Speaking with a chaplain or someone you can trust.
- Meditating

Financial wellness:

BCHS offers a stable job for staff, positions with a consistent work schedule, consistent wages (12 months), and positions may be held for many years. A consistent paycheck offers several advantages for both personal and professional lives. The knowledge of one's monthly pay enables them to plan and budget for expenses. The monthly pay information may be used to maintain a budget, allowing one to pay current bills and/or needs. It could assist in planning for savings or investments. Knowledge of consistent wages gives one a sense of financial stability and aids in reducing stress. Individuals in stable jobs often hold their positions for long periods. These positions offer numerous opportunities for developing new skills and building upon existing ones, either through daily routines or training provided by companies. The more practice one has, the more improved their skills become.

BCHS offers cost of living increases when funding is awarded by the Office of Head Start. Occasionally, incentive pay may be awarded based on tenure, retention, and other factors when funds are available within the base funding. The agency has a policy in the personnel manual that provides details regarding incentives and increases. All awards are approved by both the agency policy council and its recipient board, the Board of Supervisors before disbursement of funds.

Some strategies for staff to practice for financial wellness are listed below:

- Learn how to manage money and set a budget.
- Learn about debt and how to manage it.
- Build and establishing good credit.
- Do not live above your means.

Environmental wellness:

Head Start classrooms, buses, and playgrounds are maintained with safe, clean, and age-appropriate equipment. Classrooms and buses are sanitized daily and after each bus run. There are air fresheners and filtering systems in each classroom to promote and maintain healthy air quality.

BCHS operates its classrooms within the facilities owned and operated by the Buchanan County School Board. Buildings, water, and food are state approved and are inspected for safety and quality on a routine basis.

Some strategies that should be practiced by staff for environmental wellness are listed below:

- Not polluting the air, water, or earth.
- Enjoying and appreciating the outdoors.
- Recycling.

Social wellness:

BCHS feels that the staff social wellness is the connection staff may have to other staff and leaders, their overall sense of belonging with their co-workers and the program. It is a key indicator for staff to be productive and satisfied at work. If staff doesn't feel comfortable at work, they are less likely to maintain employment with the agency. BCHS understands that each classroom and staff needs are different. Steps are taken to better understand each individual's needs by asking how they are feeling and how BCHS can help support them. This is often done through staff surveys, offering an open-door policy of communication either in person or via phone. A line of communication is there for staff needs and concerns.

Some strategies that should be practiced by staff for social wellness are listed below:

- Joining a book club.
- Joining a gym.
- Volunteering.
- Attending community functions or events.
- Relationships - Keep in touch with family and friends.
- Communicating - Maintain eye contact, be a good listener, use open body language.
- Respecting - Others, yourself, and cultures.

Intellectual wellness:

BCHS feels that each individual member of the agency has something unique. BCHS encourages staff to be creative and active with their ideas. BCHS

encourages staff to visit other classrooms throughout the year allowing a change of environment, sharing of ideas, and socialization among staff.

Some strategies that should be practiced by staff for intellectual wellness are listed below:

- Developing time management.
- Becoming a critical thinker.
- Developing ideas, views, and opinions.
- Exposing yourself to new ideas, people, and beliefs.

Physical wellness:

BCHS cares about the health and physical well-being of its staff. The agency offers affordable health care which includes vision and dental coverage. Staff receive a single dental plan at no cost. Staff receive a single health plan with the agency covering 90 to 95% of the cost. This benefit allows staff to have yearly preventive tests, screenings and immunizations. BCHS offers nutritional, health, and safety webinar-based training that can be viewed at the convenience of the staff member. BCHS staff receive an annual TB screening at no cost. Staff are required to receive a physical biennial for employment and to meet HSPPS. Staff are encouraged to wear safety belts when lifting, place wet floor signs when mopping, and other supplies are provided to help prevent injuries. Worker's Compensation is paid on all staff and substitutes. Information is provided and posted in classrooms and on buses regarding Worker's Compensation.

Some strategies that should be used by staff for physical wellness are listed below:

- Recognizing the need for physical activity.
- Making healthy food choices.
- Increasing water intake daily.
- Getting more sleep each night.
- Managing chronic health conditions.

Community Resources;

Other opportunities BCHS can expand on is the use of community resources. This will allow the use of resources outside of the agency but within the community.

The Buchanan County Public library offers story time, crafts and a movie for the staff and children. Classroom and Home-Based children visit the library once a month and are treated to lunch at a local restaurant. The library offers

several other community involvement classes, programs, and special interest topics for adult participation.

The community parks offer classrooms outside time which differs from normal playground time. A day at the park allows staff to plan a nature walk and have a picnic at one of the many shelters.

The Grundy Community Center (movie theater) provides an occasional movie for our staff and children to enjoy. The movie is age appropriate, and the children receive a drink and popcorn.

Staff also participate and receive a feeling of giving when using another community resource called, Back Pack Blessings. This is a nonprofit community resource that supplies weekly food bags for each child to take home.

Some strategies staff may use with community resources are listed below:

- Utilize community resources such as parks.
- Volunteer at community functions such as RAM and the county fair.

Utilizing community resources can help stretch one's money.