



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

## Staff Wellness Overview

### **Q: What is wellness?**

The National Wellness Institute co-founded by Dr. Bill Hettler provides one definition of wellness as “an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Q: What is self-care?**

Self-care is any activity done with the intention of advancing our own personal wellness. Although it is a simple concept in theory, it is also often overlooked. Proper self-care is linked to improved mood and enhanced physical and mental health, which as a result helps us form closer and more productive relationships with the individuals around us.

### **Q: Why is wellness important in early childhood?**

Working in an early childhood program is a rewarding, yet a demanding career. It is inevitable to feel stress in the workplace and some stress is natural and even healthy. Good stress helps to focus on a task or perform at a higher level. Unfortunately, negative, chronic or toxic stress can take a toll on your health and effectiveness as a caregiver for young children. Caregivers who are stressed find it more difficult to offer praise, nurturance and structure throughout the day that children need.

### **Q: What does the research say about staff wellness in Head Start?**

In 2012, a study was conducted to compare the physical and mental health of women working in Pennsylvania Head Start programs with the health of US women who have similar socio-demographic characteristics. The study found that women in the Head Start programs had higher rates of fair or poor health, frequent unhealthy days, diagnosed depression and three or more physical health conditions than other women with similar socio-demographic characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

### **Q: What do the Head Start Program Performance Standards say about staff wellness?**

The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) require that a program, “must make mental health and wellness information available to staff regarding health issues that may affect their job performance, and must provide regularly scheduled opportunities to learn about mental health, wellness and health education.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> About Wellness. (n.d.). Retrieved April 10, 2018, from <http://www.nationalwellness.org/?page=AboutWellness>.

<sup>2</sup> Whitaker RC, Becker BD, Herman AN, Gooze RA. The Physical and Mental Health of Head Start Staff: The Pennsylvania Head Start Staff Wellness Survey, 2012. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2013;10:130171. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd10.130171>.

<sup>3</sup> Head Start Program Performance Standards. 45 C.F.R § 1302.93.

## Resources for Leadership and Staff

For Leadership <i>Creating a Culture to Support Staff Wellness</i>	
Office of Head Start Webinar Presentation <i>Program Approaches for Staff Wellness</i>	<a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/program-approaches-staff-wellness">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/program-approaches-staff-wellness</a>
National Head Start Association Quality Improvement Toolkit <i>Nurturing Staff Wellness</i>	<a href="https://www.nhsa.org/nurturing-staff-wellness">https://www.nhsa.org/nurturing-staff-wellness</a>
Maine Health Let's Go Initiative Workplace Toolkit	<a href="https://mainehealth.org/-/media/lets-go/files/adult-program/employees/full-workplace-toolkit.pdf">https://mainehealth.org/-/media/lets-go/files/adult-program/employees/full-workplace-toolkit.pdf</a>
Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development Posters for Head Start Staff	<a href="https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/CECMHC_GraffitiPosters.pdf">https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/CECMHC_GraffitiPosters.pdf</a>
Office of Head Start My Peers Staff Wellness Community Group	<a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-community">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-community</a>
The Policy Equity Group Resources	<a href="#">Supporting Teacher Well-Being and Caregiving Relationships to Buffer Toxic Stress PowerPoint</a>  <a href="#">Tools to Support Early Care and Education Professionals Resource List</a>
For Educators <i>Supporting Your Own Wellness</i>	
Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development Booklet <i>Taking Care of Ourselves</i>	<b>English:</b> <a href="https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/TakingCare_Provide rBk_final.pdf">https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/TakingCare_Provide rBk_final.pdf</a>  <b>Spanish:</b> <a href="https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/TCO_Providers_Spa nish_P2.pdf">https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/TCO_Providers_Spa nish_P2.pdf</a>
Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development Stress Reduction Workshop	<a href="#">Taking Care of Ourselves: Stress Reduction Workshop PowerPoint</a>  <a href="#">Stress Log Template</a>  <a href="#">Stress Workshop Evaluation</a>  <a href="#">Talk Back to Your Unhelpful Thoughts Tip Sheet</a>  <a href="#">Making a Praise Sandwich Worksheet</a>
Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development Relaxation Exercises	<b>Available in English and Spanish</b> <a href="https://www.ecmhc.org/relaxation_exercises.html">https://www.ecmhc.org/relaxation_exercises.html</a>