

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

POLICY GUIDE 2026.01

Wellness Room (Pilot) AP # 19, Property Control

DATE: August 31, 2026

TO: All DCFS Staff assigned to the Hillside and Rock Island Field office locations

FROM: Heidi E. Mueller, Director

EFFECTIVE: Immediately

I. PURPOSE

The wellness rooms are designated spaces intended to provide staff with a safe, quiet place to decompress and manage stress related to work. These spaces support mental well-being and are part of our Department's commitment to fostering a healthy workplace.

II. PRIMARY USERS

All DCFS Staff assigned to the Hillside and Rock Island Field office locations.

III. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

As part of our ongoing commitment to employee well-being, wellness rooms were introduced to provide a dedicated space for staff to relax, decompress, and manage stress during the workday. These rooms are intended to support mental health, improve workplace morale, and foster a more supportive and balanced work environment.

Over time, the need for clearer expectations regarding use, maintenance, and access has emerged to ensure the space remains equitable, functional, and aligned with Department Pillar Number Two (2) "Empowering and Equipping Our staff for Success". The following guidelines were developed in response to workgroup/staff feedback, observed usage trends, and a broader organizational focus on wellness and accountability.

This document outlines the appropriate use, access, cleanliness standards, and accountability measures for wellness rooms. Key highlights include:

- Employees are encouraged to use the wellness room during designated break and lunch times for pumping/nursing, relaxing, reflecting, and short mental health breaks.



- Socializing, meetings, and meal consumption are not permitted in the space.
- Usage is encouraged to align with existing work hour schedules (two 15-minute breaks, lunch hours, and operational needs). An occupancy indicator will display the availability of the room.
- Employees are responsible for keeping the room clean and reporting any maintenance needs.
- Misuse may result in corrective action, while flexibility is encouraged for staff experiencing acute stress or wellness needs.
- Each Facility's Wellness Sub-Committee may customize the wellness room to better serve the specific needs and preferences of its staff, provided it remains consistent with the Department's overall guidelines.

A status report will be used to track program usage trends, gather staff feedback, and provide recommendations for future improvements. Each Facility's Wellness Sub-Committee will be responsible for collecting staff input through surveys, interviews, or informal feedback channels. The purpose is to assess current needs, identify what is working well, and monitor how those needs evolve over time. The Wellness Sub-Committees will compile their findings and share them with the Department Wellness Committee or Director's designee, who will coordinate the development and submission of the formal status report to the Director.

IV. Definitions

“Wellness Committee” means a centralized, department-wide group of employees responsible for guiding and supporting wellness initiatives across the Department. Its role includes setting wellness priorities, developing policies, ensuring consistency across facilities, evaluating program effectiveness, and promoting a culture of well-being aligned with departmental goals and values.

“Wellness rooms” are designated spaces designed to support mental and physical well-being, offering a private area for employees to de-stress, recharge, and prioritize self-care. These rooms can provide staff with a calm environment for activities like meditation, quiet reflection, nursing, or simply taking a break from the demands of their professional duties.

“Wellness Sub-Committee” means a facility- or office/unit-level team that operates under the direction of the Wellness Committee. It is responsible for implementing wellness initiatives locally, adapting programs to meet the specific needs of staff, collecting feedback, and ensuring that wellness room usage and practices align with departmental guidelines.

V. INSTRUCTIONS

a) Appropriate Use

Wellness rooms are intended for:

- Use by one individual at a time to ensure privacy and tranquility;
- Nursing mothers are given priority access (*Each room will be equipped with an occupancy indicator (vacant/occupied) to maintain privacy and convenience*);
- Taking brief mental health breaks to recharge and reset;
- Rest and decompression during authorized break times, supported by an in-room timer;
- Quiet reflection, mindfulness, or personal time in a calming and private environment; and
- Activities such as meditation, self-reflection, prayer, or yoga.

The following uses are not permitted:

- Meetings;
- Social gatherings or visiting with coworkers;
- Eating meals or snacks (*other than medical exceptions*); and
- Extended or repeated use that interferes with required work hours.

Note: Please ensure that all furnishing and décor of the wellness room comply with CMS guidelines.

b) Break Time & Access

All staff are accountable for fulfilling their full 37.5-hour workweek. Employees are encouraged to use the wellness room in a way that aligns with existing break and lunch schedules, and operational needs, as outlined in the Employee Handbook:

- **Five-day work schedule:** 15-minute rest periods, twice per day; or
- **Four-day work schedule:** 20-minute rest periods, twice per day

These designated times, as well as unpaid lunch periods, are appropriate times to use the wellness room.

An occupancy indicator (vacant/occupied) will display usage and ensure availability for all staff; no sign-up sheet or tracker will be utilized with the wellness room.

c) Cleanliness & Maintenance

After using the room, employees must:

- Leave the space clean and tidy;
- Remove all personal belongings and trash;
- Refrain from leaving food items behind (*no food consumption should occur in the room unless medically necessary*); and
- Ensure a hygienic environment for the next user (*e.g., by using sanitizing wipes, etc.*).

If items provided by the Department are not functioning or need restocking, employees should:

- Notify the Facilities Wellness Sub-Committee; and
- Report what needs to be replaced or repaired.

d) Accountability & Misuse

Inappropriate use of the wellness room—including destruction of items or abuse of allotted time—will result in corrective action and progressive discipline.

Examples of misuse include:

- Using the room beyond designated breaks without approval from a supervisor; Removing items from the room without permission;
- Using the space for purposes outside its intended or defined scope;
- Repeatedly failing to follow cleanliness and maintenance expectations; and
- Damaging equipment, furnisher, or décor.

e) Managerial Support & Flexibility

While employees are encouraged to use the wellness room during their standard break times and lunch hours, **supervisors should remain flexible** given the unpredictable and high-stress nature of some work duties. Employees are expected to **inform their supervisor** when they need to use the wellness room outside regular break or lunch times due to acute stress or other wellness needs. Supervisors are encouraged to support mental health and well-being as part of overall staff care.

VI. QUESTIONS

Questions regarding this Policy Guide may be directed to the Office of Administrative Services via Outlook at DCFS.PropertyControl Non-Outlook users may e-mail questions to DCFS.PropertyControl@Illinois.gov.

VII. FILING INSTRUCTIONS

File this Policy Guide at the end of **Administrative Procedures #19 Property Control** (behind page 16).

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