

Shawnee State University

POLICY TITLE:	WELLNESS BREAK POLICY
POLICY NO.:	4.98
ADMIN CODE:	3362-4-98
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EFFECTIVE DATE:	04/17/2026
NEXT REVIEW DATE:	04/2031
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
APPROVED BY:	BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1.0 PURPOSE

Shawnee State University values the health, engagement, and overall well-being of its employees. This policy establishes a structured Wellness Break opportunity that encourages employees to engage in brief, restorative activities during the workday. These breaks are intended to promote physical and mental wellness, reduce stress, and increase workplace productivity — consistent with the mission of the Bear Well program (www.shawnee.edu/bearwell).

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Eligible employees may take up to 20 minutes per workday (in one or two increments) to engage in approved wellness activities designed to promote holistic well-being. These breaks are voluntary, supervisor-approved, and non-cumulative (they do not carry over from day to day).

The university encourages employees to use these breaks to foster healthier habits, community connection, and self-care while maintaining operational continuity and productivity.

3.0 LEGAL COMPLIANCE

This policy complies with applicable Ohio state and federal labor laws, including U.S. Department of Labor regulations which provide that short breaks of 20 minutes or less are considered compensable time, while breaks exceeding 20 minutes must be designated as unpaid and recorded appropriately.

Employees with approved accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Rehabilitation Act, or similar state law that include rest or wellness time shall remain eligible for such accommodations concurrent with the rest and wellness time provided by this policy.

Supervisors must ensure accurate timekeeping and fair access for all employees.

4.0 ELIGIBILITY

This policy applies to:

1. All full-time and part-time non-student employees (administrative, executive, public safety, and support staff).
2. Student employees may participate in wellness activities outside of scheduled work hours.

Supervisors are responsible for approving the timing of wellness breaks to ensure departmental operations continue effectively.

5.0 BEAR WELL PROGRAM MEMBERSHIP

Employees are encouraged to participate in the Bear Well Program to support their health and well-being. To become a member, employees must register through the official Bear Well website or visit the Bear Well Center in person. Membership provides access to a variety of wellness resources, activities, and support services designed to promote a healthy lifestyle. Participation in the program is voluntary and open to all full-time and part-time non-student employees (faculty, administrative, and support staff).

6.0 DURATION AND SCHEDULING

6.1 Employees may take up to 20 minutes per workday, either:

6.1.1 As a single 20-minute block (if workload allows), or

6.1.2 As two shorter breaks (e.g., 10 minutes each) subject to the approval of their supervisor.

6.2 Breaks shall be scheduled to avoid disruption of classes, meetings, or service operations.

6.3 Breaks shall not be combined with meal periods or used to alter arrival/departure times.

6.4 Supervisors may reasonably deny or reschedule breaks based on operational needs, but are encouraged to support participation whenever possible.

7.0 APPROVED WELLNESS ACTIVITIES

Employees may engage in a variety of individual or group wellness activities, including but not limited to:

7.1 Physical Wellness:

7.1.1 Walking, stretching, or light exercise (indoors or outdoors).

- 7.1.2 Use of the Bear Well Fitness (members only) & Recreation Center (www.shawnee.edu/bearwell) for treadmill use, yoga, or strength training.
- 7.1.3 Participation in Bear Well fitness classes or health challenges (members only).
- 7.2 Mental & Emotional Wellness:
 - 7.2.1 Guided meditation, breathing exercises, or mindfulness sessions.
 - 7.2.2 Quiet time in reflection or relaxation spaces.
 - 7.2.3 Bear Well workshops on stress management or resilience (members only).
- 7.3 Social & Community Wellness:
 - 7.3.1 Peer wellness walks or team challenges.
 - 7.3.2 University-sponsored volunteer or community wellness events.
 - 7.3.3 Visiting Bear Well areas for health screenings or events (members only).
- 7.4 Environmental & Occupational Wellness:
 - 7.4.1 Refreshing workspace or ergonomic stretches.
 - 7.4.2 Attending quick safety or wellness learning sessions via HR or Bear Well.
- 8.0 COMPENSATION AND TIMEKEEPING
 - 8.1 Breaks up to 20 minutes are considered paid and part of the workday.
 - 8.2 Breaks over 20 minutes, up to 30 minutes, may be designated as unpaid and must be recorded accurately on the employee's time record (for hourly/non-exempt employees).
 - 8.3 Supervisors should ensure consistent application across their teams and prevent abuse of time.
- 9.0 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors are expected to:

 - 9.1 Support employee participation in wellness breaks while balancing department needs;
 - 9.2 Model wellness behavior by participating in wellness activities, where possible;
 - 9.3 Monitor fair and consistent access among all team members; and

- 9.4 Ensure proper timekeeping and prevent misuse (e.g., extending lunches or early departures).

10.0 PROGRAM RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

- 10.1 The Bear Well Center offers its members a variety of wellness programs and resources, including:

- 10.1.1 Fitness classes, personal training, and open gym access;
- 10.1.2 Nutrition counseling, wellness challenges, and health screenings; and
- 10.1.3 Educational workshops on mindfulness, work-life balance, and resilience.

- 10.2 Additional recommended resources:

- 10.2.1 Ohio Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for mental health and stress support;
- 10.2.2 Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) Well-Being Partner Resources for retirement-linked wellness incentives; and
- 10.2.3 Local Community Wellness Partners, such as the Scioto County Health Department and Southern Ohio Medical Center (SOMC) Wellness Center.

11.0 POLICY VIOLATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Abuse or misuse of wellness breaks (e.g., repeated extended absences, combining with meal periods, or using for non-wellness personal errands) may result in corrective action consistent with university policy.

Supervisors should document concerns and consult Human Resources (HR) prior to initiating disciplinary steps.

12.0 REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The HR department and Bear Well leadership will regularly review this policy to:

- 12.1 Assess participation and effectiveness;
- 12.2 Identify improvements or expanded offerings; and
- 12.3 Ensure continued compliance with applicable laws and institutional priorities.

History

Effective: 4/17/2026