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Best Practices
Developing Your Healthy Food Policy

This document provides a model for developing policy statements to support access to healthy food at your workplace. These examples are adapted from policies implemented by organizations using WorkHealthy America. Annotations explain the importance of including the key components of a healthy food policy and provide suggestions for tailoring the policies to meet the needs of your worksite.

Drafting a Healthy Food Policy: Getting Started

Start by looking at your existing worksite environment and making a list of the food venues over which you have control. As you draft your policy, be sure to address access to affordable healthy foods at all times and in all locations. You should also consider all the audiences that will be impacted by your healthy food policy, including food vendors, caterers, employees, and guests, and how your policy will be communicated (for example, through vendor contracts, internal memos, and cafeteria signage).

To help employees and guests fully embrace your policies, consider the spirit of the language used. Your policy should focus on shaping an environment where healthy food and beverage choices are easy and affordable, rather than banning unhealthy options or dictating what individuals must eat or drink.

> **Key Questions to Consider**
>
> - What food venues does our organization control?
> - How will our organization define what food and beverages are "healthy" in our policy?
> - What groups will be affected by our policy?
> - How can our policy support healthy food and beverage choices that are easy and affordable for all groups?
> - How will we communicate our policy with those groups?

Keep in mind the core principles of creating a healthy food environment and how your policy can be a tool to facilitate them:

o *Access*: Provide access to healthy foods.
o *Pricing*: Use pricing structure to incentivize customers to purchase healthy items.
o *Marketing*: Use marketing techniques to promote healthy foods.
o *Benefits*: Use benefit design and/or wellness incentives to encourage behavior change.
o *Education*: Implement an education campaign to promote the healthy food environment with employees.

What Should Your Healthy Food Policy Cover?

Your policy should include a statement defining your worksite's nutrition criteria and provide guidelines for meeting these criteria at all food venues. Create your policy by selecting the samples that apply to the food venues at your worksite. This document provides examples for the key components listed to the right.

- **Overview Statement**
- **Definition of "Healthy"**
- **Specific Food Venues Included:**
    o Cafeterias, cafes, coffee shops, fast food vendors, and other food services
    o Vending machines
    o Catering for meetings and work-related events
    o Staff break room

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Sample Healthy Food Policy Language

Overview Statement

" Through its food services, [ORGANIZATION] believes it is important to **provide employees and guests with healthy food choices** that support [ORGANIZATION]'s efforts to help employees and guests attain optimal health. The intent of this policy is to establish a **healthy food environment as the norm,** not the exception, making it easy and affordable to select healthy choices while dining at or with [ORGANIZATION]. The impression from food venues, vending, and company-sponsored events should be that **healthy food and beverages are the default choice.**

"

FRAMING:
MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES EASY
This introductory language expresses the value of supporting good nutrition at your worksite.

Definition of "Healthy"

"

For the purposes of [ORGANIZATION]'S healthy food environment, **"healthy"** is defined by the most current nutrition standards and USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Per serving calorie criteria at the time of this policy publication are outlined below:
a. Main dish <XXX calories
        Single entrée or meal component such as casserole, sandwich, meat/fish serving
b. Side item <XXX calories
        Rice, potatoes, noodles, fruits, vegetables
c. Meal <XXX calories
        Featured meal/pre-plated meal with main dish and sides
d. Soup (8 oz.) <XXX calories
e. Desserts/breads <XXX calories
        Desserts, quick breads, muffins, rolls
f. Snacks <XXX calories
        Packaged or portioned pretzels, chips, crackers, cookies
g. Condiments <XX calories
        1 Tbsp. mayo, ketchup, mustard, dressing
h. Beverages (8 oz.)
        Plain or flavored water, coffee, unsweetened tea
        Sports drinks, diet sodas, juice drinks: <XX calories per 8 oz
        Milks and coffee drinks: <XXX calories per 8 oz
        100% juice: no limit on calories; 12 oz max

"

DEFINING "HEALTHY"
You should provide a clear definition for "healthy" to food service staff and employees that will guide food selections available at any food venue.

TIP: STAYING UP-TO-DATE
Providing nutrition criteria in an appendix to your policy is a best practice that will make it easier to update guidelines to reflect the most current standards. Check the **HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENT NUTRITION CRITERIA: CAFETERIA & CATERING** resource in the WorkHealthy America toolbox for Prevention Partners' most recent recommended nutrition standards that meet USDA Guidelines.

Food Venues

*Policy sample covering **cafeterias, cafes, coffee shops, fast food vendors, and other food services***

"

[ORGANIZATION] will to carry out the following strategies to fulfill our commitment to creating a healthy food environment:

XX% of food and beverages offered through [ORGANIZATION] food venues, such as [CAFETERIA, CAFÉ, COFFEE SHOP, FAST FOOD VENDOR, OTHER FOOD SERVICE VENUE] shall meet "healthy" criteria.

"Right-sized" portioned foods and beverages that meet [ORGANIZATION]'s definition of "healthy" will be **priced an average of 25% lower than those that do not meet the standard.** This applies to all [ORGANIZATION] [FOOD SERVICE VENUES].

100% of all foods and beverages sold at [ORGANIZATION] cafeterias and vending or offered at company-sponsored events shall contain visible calorie labeling per serving and serving size.

"

KEY PRINCIPLE: PRICING
Establishing an average minimum of a 25% price differential between healthy and less healthy "like" items (i.e., entrée to entrée, side to side etc.) at all food venues such as eateries and vending is a best practice. For more support with pricing, check out **TIPS FOR PRICING HEALTHY FOODS** in the WorkHealthy America toolbox.

KEY PRINCIPLE: EDUCATION
Nutrition labels on all food and beverage products can help employees and guests make healthy choices.

*Policy sample covering **vending machines***

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[ORGANIZATION] will negotiate with contracted food vendors to ensure that vending machine beverages and snacks meet the following nutrition standards.

Beverages
XX% of beverages offered in each vending machine shall include:
1. Water
2. Flavored water and sports drinks, max XX calories per 8 oz.
3. Unflavored non-fat or 1% low-fat milk
4. 100% fruit/vegetable juice or unsweetened tea
5. Regular (black) coffee or all other non-caloric beverages, including diet

Snack Food
XX% of snacks/food offered in each vending machine shall meet the following criteria:
1. < XXX calories per serving
2. < XX% total calories from fat, excluding nuts and seeds
3. < XX% total calories from saturated fat
4. Zero trans-fat
5. < 140 mg of sodium per serving
6. < XX% calories from total sugars (Exception: unflavored or flavored non-fat and low-fat yogurt with 30g or less per 8 oz. portion)
7. Item selection should prioritize whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and nuts and seeds

Advertising on vending machines shall only promote foods and beverages that meet the nutrition standards outlined above.

Snacks and beverages that meet the nutrition standards shall be priced equal to or lower than the price of foods and beverages that do not meet the standards.

"

Check the **HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENT NUTRITION CRITERIA: VENDING** resource in the WorkHealthy America toolbox for Prevention Partners' most recent recommended nutrition standards that meet USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

KEY PRINCIPLE: MARKETING
This language reinforces the key principle of using marketing techniques like point-of-purchase advertising on vending machines to encourage healthy choices.

KEY PRINCIPLE: PRICING
This language makes a commitment to using pricing structure to incentivize customers to purchase healthy options.

*Policy sample covering **catering for meetings and work-related events***

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All vendors, including our [ORGANIZATION] cafeterias and external caterers who provide food and beverages to [ORGANIZATION] facilities, will ensure that 60% of food and beverage options served at company-sponsored events meet our healthy food criteria and will label foods and beverages at these events with calorie and serving size.

Any department or individual ordering for an event for which [ORGANIZATION] is paying all or part of the bill, is responsible for following these guidelines.

Company-sponsored events include meetings, training/in-services, celebrations, open houses/ribbon cuttings, board meetings, fund-raising events, marketing and promotional events, etc. for any audience such as employees, visitors, board members, clients, etc. The vendor of the catered food may be internal or external to the organization. Exemptions include food provided by staff or leader from personal funds, such as potlucks, and personally-funded fundraisers.

Nutrition labeling listing the item and calories per serving must be on the product or visible for each item to allow guests to make informed choices at the point of decision.

Examples include:

- Manufacturer's package label
- Stickers affixed to the package/box (i.e. box lunches or grab-and-go items)
- Signage in front/on the serving line via poster, table tents, etc.
- Signage affixed to the cooler/case.

Serving lines, plated and packaged foods should include proper serving-sized portions. If prepackaged items include more than one serving, labeling should clearly state serving size.

"

KEY PRINCIPLE: ACCESS
This language supports access to healthy food at all times by clearly defining meetings and special events covered by the policy.

KEY PRINCIPLE: EDUCATION
As a best practice, food labeling should be carried out not only in the cafeteria setting but also at meetings and special events. Consider providing information about calories and portion sizes, particularly in self-serve food lines.

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Policy sample covering **staff break rooms**

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[ORGANIZATION] supports the health of its employees and visitors by ensuring a healthy food environment in the following ways:

- **By regularly making fresh fruit, fresh water, and other healthy beverages, such as teas, available to staff in the break room.**
- By encouraging staff to comply with our healthy food policy when they bring food from home to share. Staff are discouraged from "junk food dumping" (i.e. sharing leftover party treats from home such as Halloween candy, leftover birthday cake, and other treats). Instead, staff are encouraged to bring:
    - **Fruits and/or vegetables**
    Including fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits (such as grapefruit, oranges, apples, raisins, or 100% fruit juices) or fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables
    - **Low-fat dairy products**
    Including low-fat and fat-free milk and yogurt, cheese and ice cream, and calcium fortified soy beverages
    - **Foods made with whole grains**
    Including low-fat whole-wheat crackers, bread and pasta; whole grain ready to eat cereal, low-fat baked tortilla chips, pita bread

"

KEY PRINCIPLE: ACCESS
Access to healthy snacks and beverages in the break room encourages staff to choose healthy options even without on-site food venues.