



PUBLIC PLACES SHOULD OFFER BETTER OPTIONS.

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Healthier Food Options for Public Places: Frequently Asked Questions

Getting started

Why adopt healthy vending, or healthier food options for public places policies?

Improving the nutritional quality of foods and beverages in public places is a low-cost, multi-sector intervention that can help to change social norms, contribute to a healthier food system, and support environmentally sustainable, ethical, and equitable production methods. Different entities might refer to healthier food options for public places different ways, including procurement or food service guidelines. While the terms generally refer to the same types of policies, some message research has indicated that healthier food options for public places resonates best with the public. For more information, see:

- ▶ [Infographic: The Logic Behind Food Service Guidelines](#)
- ▶ [Fact Sheet: 9 Reasons to Offer Healthier Options at Public Facilities](#)
- ▶ [Understanding Healthy Procurement: Using Government's Purchasing Power to Increase Healthy Food \(Resource by NPLAN\)](#)

My city, county, or state is interested in adopting standards for healthier foods sold and served on public property. Where should we start?

Voices for Healthy Kids, a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has developed a [toolkit](#) that offers insights and suggestions for advocates on recruiting, engaging, and mobilizing communities in support of vending and healthier food options for public places policies and a [messaging one-pager](#) with tips about how to talk about the issue. CSPI's [webpage](#) has a number of resources, including fact sheets that cover the reasons to offer healthier food and beverages on public property, model bills, and toolkits from partner organizations.

Where have vending and food service guideline policies been adopted?

More than 100 policies have been adopted across the country at the local, state, and national levels. Read [summaries](#) of existing policies and see a [map](#) of where policies have been adopted.

How can a private organization or business make healthier foods available to its employees?

Organizations and businesses can adopt healthier food options policies for any food venues available to employees or members, including cafeterias, vending machines, snack bars, and meetings and events. The American Heart Association's [Food and Beverage Toolkit](#) and the National Alliance for Nutrition's [Healthy Meeting Toolkit](#) offer recommendations for healthier menus, advice for working with caterers, employees, and management, and other tips for creating healthier working environments for employees.

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Where can I get advice about healthier food service guidelines policies and implementation?

Stay updated as policies pass by [signing up](#) to receive news from Voices for Healthy Kids, and engage with others working on this issue by signing up for the [healthy food options in public places action team](#) at the Voices for Healthy Kids Action Center. The [National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity's \(NANA's\)](#) procurement networking group has quarterly calls to share lessons learned and resources. To join NANA or be added to the procurement networking group's listserv, contact nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org. The [Food Service Guideline Collaborative](#) (FSGC) includes government and non-government partners committed to normalizing the availability of more healthful and sustainable foods in the places we work, learn, and play. The FSGC currently consists of 31 partners representing federal, state, and local agencies, non-profit organizations, and universities.

Developing guidelines and policies

What model food service guidelines standards are available?

Several sets of nutrition standards are applicable to healthier food options for public places. Many jurisdictions adopt standards from the [National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity](#), the [American Heart Association](#), or the federal government's [food service guidelines](#). The standards [vary slightly](#) with regard to specific nutrient levels, but similar [products](#) can often be procured that meet all the standards. In some cases, the standards are written into the legislative text, and in other cases, the legislation charges a committee to develop standards; the committee can either adopt existing standards or propose its own. In addition to setting nutrition standards, it is important to indicate what percent of items must meet the standards and which venues are required to meet the standards.

- ▶ [Nutrition Standards Comparison Chart](#)

In addition to nutrition standards, what should the policy include?

Healthier food options for public places policies should include strategies to promote the healthier options and nudge people toward making healthier choices, including competitive pricing, placement in prominent selling locations, and signage and marketing of the healthier options.

- ▶ [Tips for Successful Implementation](#)
- ▶ [Taste-test Protocol](#)
- ▶ [Fact Sheet: Vending Machine Labeling](#)
- ▶ [Healthier Vending Marketing Posters](#)

How can employers create healthier environments for their employees at meetings and events?

States, localities, institutions, and private organizations and companies can support health by offering healthier food and beverage options at events and meetings. The American Heart Association's [Food and Beverage Toolkit](#) includes many sample menus and suggestions for healthier cooking methods and guidance for leadership, management, caterers, and food vendors. The [Healthy Meeting Toolkit](#)

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provides practical advice for planning healthier meetings and events, including sample evaluations, tips for working with caterers, and sample menus. Please take the [Healthy Meeting Pledge](#) by filling out the [Model Healthy Meeting Pledge](#) (or create your own) and send to nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org.

Will healthier products cost the vendor or consumer more?

Not necessarily. Many vendors have found that revenue is unaffected by implementing healthy vending, and some vendors have experienced an increase in sales when they increased healthier options. As food service managers shift to healthier options, there are many ways to manage costs, including reducing waste, better inventory management, marketing, and training. Pricing healthier options less than unhealthy options is an effective strategy for increasing consumption of healthier options, without negatively influencing revenue.

- ▶ [Fact Sheet: Financial Implications of Healthy Vending](#)
- ▶ [Tips for Managing Food Service Costs](#)
- ▶ [Fact Sheet: Healthy Product Supply Chain](#)

What kind of policy approaches can be used to adopt food service guidelines?

Healthier food options for public places can be adopted using a variety of approaches including passing a bill in the state legislature or city, town, or county council; an executive order from the governor or mayor; or through regulations or contracting by an agency.

- ▶ [Model Vending Agreement \(ChangeLab Solutions\)](#)

Implementing the standards

How are the food service standards implemented?

Implementation can be overseen by a purchasing or procurement office, a health department, or each covered agency individually. Standards are often written into a government's [purchasing contracts](#). Keep in mind that there might be different contracts for vending and food service and different contracts for different agencies. It is important to consider ways to facilitate [successful implementation](#) in the policy development stage, for example by engaging stakeholders and including enforcement provisions.

- ▶ [Product list: Snack, Entrée, and Beverage Options that Meet NANA, AHA, and Federal Food Service Guidelines](#)
- ▶ [Fact Sheet: Healthy Product Supply Chain](#)
- ▶ [Taste-test Protocol](#)
- ▶ [Pre- and Post-Implementation Survey](#)
- ▶ [Tips for Managing Food Service Costs](#)

Will people buy healthier products?

Yes! Demand for healthier products continues to grow. Successful healthier vending policies have included engagement with stakeholders, including working with vendors to identify products that meet the standards and conducting taste tests to identify products that will sell well. It is also important to

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monitor which products are selling well and which ones should be replaced with other options. Keep in mind that it might take a transition period to find the right combination of healthier offerings.

- ▶ [Product List: Snack, Entrée, and Beverage Options that Meet NANA, AHA, and Federal Food Service Guidelines](#)
- ▶ [Taste-test Protocol](#)
- ▶ [Fact Sheet: Financial Implications of Healthy Vending](#)

How can I successfully engage with blind vendors?

The [Randolph-Sheppard Act](#) prioritizes contracting with legally blind vendors to operate vending machines and concessions on government property. While the Act is federal, every state except for North and South Dakota has adopted similar laws, known as [mini-Randolph Sheppard Acts](#), which can affect city and county food service.

If blind vendors run your vending or food service, engage with them early in the process of adopting healthier standards. To ease the vendors' concerns, show that healthy vending can be cost neutral or even lead to revenue increases. Prior to and throughout implementation, focus on products that will sell by conducting surveys and taste tests. As standards are adopted, market and promote the healthier options.

- ▶ [Healthy Vending and the Randolph Sheppard Act \(PHLC and AHA/ASA\)](#)
- ▶ [Pre- and Post-Implementation Survey](#)
- ▶ [Taste-test Protocol](#)
- ▶ [Tips for Working with Vendors](#)

What other laws should I be aware of that will affect vending and food service settings?

Food and beverage vending machines that are owned or operated by vendors with 20 or more machines are required by federal law to have [calorie labeling](#). Congress passed a national law in March 2010 requiring calories to be posted on vending machines by December 1, 2016 (the law also requires labeling on menus, menu boards, and for food on display at restaurants, supermarkets, convenience stores, movie theaters, and other food service establishments with 20 or more outlets). [21 U.S.C. 343(q)(5)(H)(viii)]. In addition to vending labeling, the [Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities](#) also recommend menu labeling for cafeteria food on public property.