



## Guidelines for Implementation

### Guidelines for a Healthy Choices Vending Machine Policy

#### **Assess your current vendor contract environment**

*What is your starting point?*

Among those who have or have tried to implement such a policy change, the barriers were most often linked to vendor issues, including push-back over fear of loss of revenue and contracting arrangements (de-centralization and complexity, connections, etc).

Determine if your organization uses a central vendor or if every facility has its own contract. Large organizations may have de-centralized policy and contracting which can introduce complexity. Consider having one authority over the vending machines to effectively implement the new policy and best assess the impact.

When are contracts set to expire? Many contracts are for a single year, but not all.

*Dealing with pushback from vendors:*

Vendors may be reluctant to switch to healthy options due to an expectation they will lose revenue. Advocates for healthy alternatives often use smoking cessation as an example: restaurants and bars did not lose money. In cases where vendors may have offered a “trial” and reportedly lost revenue, there may not have been an awareness campaign in place, or sufficient time allowed for behavior change. Don’t let the change to 50% healthy choices be an option for facilities and vendors. Let your vendor(s) know you will promote the purchase of healthy food choices with your employees.

Selecting alternatives: many vending machine companies do have healthy options available, but you need to request them. If they do not have such options or are unwilling to make changes, a list of 9 companies offering choices is included in your packet. The vending industry is poised for positive change: recent attention to the obesity epidemic and announcement of new federal guidelines on diet, have spurred

self-improvement. This includes offering healthier products, providing software to evaluate snacks and development of material to alert consumers to their choices (e.g. traffic light stickers).

## **Create awareness of new healthy choices through an education program for employees and/or members/patients.**

If you build it, they may come, but you do have to tell them about it. Successful programs require an education program to create awareness and re-enforce the importance of making healthy choices.

### *Highlight the new policy and healthy choices:*

Place stickers on the vending machines to indicate “something’s new.” Consider having regular vending machine slots assigned to healthy products

Announce the new policy in employee newsletters and in internet and intranet features

Feature lunch room/cafeteria and waiting room posters

Integrate access to these healthy foods and beverages in current health and wellness programs

Consider supplementing by making similar choices available in cafeterias and for catered events

Look for internal and external opportunities to highlight, e.g. March is National Nutrition Month (The American Dietetic Association has campaign messages, ideas and events on their website)

### *Be sensitive in messaging*

Always emphasize healthy “choices” and “alternatives.” The idea of “food police” can deter the best intentions whether you’re dealing with employees or members/patients.

### *No need to re-invent the wheel*

If you don’t have in-house staff or the resources to develop consumer education material, there are many state and national resources that have produced effective material for public use. Resources include California’s Department of Health Services and 5 A Day program, the American Dietetic Association, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, CDC, etc. These groups are often looking to partner on programs, using material already tested with consumers. Contact your state or local chapter if you don’t already have an existing relationship.

### *There are many opportunities and settings to extend the policy*

A brief environmental assessment shows that much of the work done in this area appears to be focused on kids and schools. California is a leader in this area, but more can be done. Adopting a policy on health vending machine options can be extended into many other settings. Talk to your customers, affiliates/partners, business and your community about what changes you’ve implemented for your organization. Talk about the impact that obesity has on health care costs, productivity, competitiveness and quality of life.

### *Reach out to policymakers.*

While adopting this policy is voluntary, change can be accelerated through focusing policy-makers attention on the issue through hearings, public forums, and media attention. Consider starting on the local level. Counties with a progressive track record on public health issues are a natural starting point. For example, the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors has already adopted this policy. Offer your organization’s support and be willing to speak at a hearing and be interviewed by local press.