



Healthy Vending Machine Policy Contra Costa County

Policy Overview

On December 14, 2004, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors adopted a healthy vending machine policy. The policy requires that food and beverages offered in vending machines located on county owned, operated or leased properties meet specified nutrition standards.

This policy specifies the following nutrition standards for beverages and snacks sold in vending machines:

Fifty percent of beverages offered in each vending machine shall be:

- water, coffee or tea
- reduced fat milk
- 100% fruit/vegetable juice
- fruit-based drinks containing at least 50% juice and no added caloric sweeteners, and
- non-caloric beverages

or a combination of the above.

Fifty percent of snacks/foods offered in each vending machine shall meet the following criteria:

- not more than 35% calories from fat with the exception of nuts and seeds
- snack mixes and other foods of which nuts are a part must meet the 35% standard
- not more than 10% of calories from saturated fat
- contains no trans fats added during processing (hydrogenated oils and partially hydrogenated oils)
- not more than 35% total weight from sugar and caloric sweeteners with the exception of fruits and vegetables that have not been processed with added sweeteners or fats
- at least one item meeting the snack criteria in each vending machine shall also meet the FDA definition of “low sodium.”

The policy is available at www.cchealth.org/topics/nutrition/cc_county_vending_machine_policy.php

Key Steps Undertaken to Get Policy Adopted

The idea to pursue this policy at the County Board of Supervisors’ level stemmed from discussions between staff of Contra Costa County Health Services and staff of a County Supervisor. The policy was an adaptation of a bill that had been introduced in the California Senate by the Senator who represents Contra Costa County.

- County Supervisor John Gioia and his staff were interested in implementing a vending machine policy at the county level and secured passage of a county resolution instructing the public health department staff to review a draft policy and create specific standards to present back to the Board.
- Public Health Department staff prepared a proposed policy that included the requirement that vending machines offer healthy options and that created standards defining the criteria for these foods and beverages and forwarded it to the County Board of Supervisors. The Public Health Department attached

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Key Steps Undertaken to Get Policy Adopted (continued)

to the policy a list of food options that would meet the criteria and a list of vendors that provide healthy choices.

- A meeting was held among staff of the Public Health Department, the County Administrative Office and the County Counsel to ensure the feasibility of the proposed policy.
- Supervisor Gioia's staff identified supporters of the policy among community stakeholders including health groups such as the American Cancer Society.
- Supervisor Gioia's staff identified other potential supporters on the County Board.
- On December 14, 2004, the Director of Community Wellness and Prevention Services from the Public Health Department testified at the County Board of Supervisors meeting and provided samples of healthy foods that met the proposed standards. The healthy food demonstration proved to be an important effort: it illustrated to Supervisors that the policy allowed flavorful products that are appealing to the average person.
- Language was included in the policy that requires that the General Services Department provide semiannual implementation reports to the County Board until the policy is fully implemented.

Lessons Learned

- It is extremely important to have a policymaker as a champion from planning to implementation.
- There may be hesitation among county staff to the adoption of a vending machine policy due to concerns about the feasibility of implementation.
- It is vital to engage public health staff in support of any proposed policy to ensure that there is credible data available on the need for a vending machine policy to present to policymakers.
- The policy should include and clearly describe monitoring, implementation, and enforcement mechanisms, including assigning responsibility to specific staff or organizational unit.
- The inclusion of a restriction of foods with trans fats in proposed nutrition standards required the Public Health Department staff to provide additional education to the Department of General Services and vendors. This task required more staff time, an investment the Public Health Department felt was worthwhile.
- Implementation took longer than expected. It was time consuming to assess the number, location, and contents of all vending machines on county and county-operated property.
- Periodic monitoring is necessary to ensure that the provisions of the policy are put into practice.
- Guidance for the public is helpful. The Public Health Department designed a star system to assist patrons in choosing foods that meet the healthy criteria. Posters, with a green star logo, describe the benefits of healthy choices and are placed next to vending machines. Green star stickers are placed next to the healthy items inside the vending machines.

Contact Information

For more information contact: Luz Gomez, Office of John Gioia, District 1 Supervisor, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, (510) 374-3231, dist1@bos.co.contra-costa.ca.us, or Charlotte Dickson, Contra Costa Health Services, (925) 313-6217, cdickson@hdsd.eccounty.us.

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