



## Summary of Focus Groups and In-Depth Interview for Healthy Vending Machine Initiative

### Focus Group One

Community Members were recruited from English as Second Language (ESL) class in the City of Chula Vista. The focus group lasted for 45 minutes. Thirteen community members participated in the discussion. The objective of the focus group was to learn ways to address healthy vending in the city and the opinions of consumers about the policy.

#### Results:

- ❖ Consumers indicated that they would buy from vending machines (VM) if the offer healthy snacks.
- ❖ They would like options, such as refrigerated snacks.
- ❖ Consumers considered healthy: water, juice, milk, vegetable and fruits, granola bars, dried fruit, crackers and others.
- ❖ Most of the participants in the group were parents. They mentioned numerous times that unhealthy vending in schools were a concern for them. They reported that unhealthy snacks were an irresponsible policy in the schools.
- ❖ They mentioned that authorities do not want to address these issues. One parent said: 'the schools promote healthy eating but offer unhealthy foods'.
- ❖ Participants based their selection of snacks primary on the price.
- ❖ They would rather pay a higher price for some healthy offerings.
- ❖ They also recognize that unhealthy items are usually cheaper than healthy snacks.
- ❖ Participants recommended moving vending machines from hallways to more 'difficult' to get spots. One participant said 'vending machines should not be around you all the time, making you think that you are hungry'.
- ❖ Kiosks or small cafeterias should be available to sell healthy snacks.
- ❖ Consumers recommended that healthy messages were placed on signs and posters around the vending machines.
- ❖ Use superheroes to advertise healthy foods. Post signage around the vending machine, logos to identify healthy snacks.
- ❖ Inform the community about the link between unhealthy vending and the epidemic of obesity.

### Focus Group Two

The participants were recruited through the human resources department and were Stakeholders/Directors and/or Representatives of Chula Vista City. The group was composed of directors or representatives of parks and recreation, library, police, human resources, purchasing departments of the city. There were six participants in the group.

## Results:

- ❖ Among the themes that rise from the focus group were: type of offerings to consumers, their definition of healthy snacks, barriers and facilitators to healthy vending. The group also highlighted ways to recruit and involve other stakeholders as well as consumers.
- ❖ Thoughts: 'healthy stuff is prohibited', 'healthy snacks are perishable', healthy snacks don't sell'
- ❖ Successful healthy vending should have consumer input.
- ❖ The healthy vending 'is wishing thinking' market forces drive the market to sell unhealthy snacks.
- ❖ They considered healthy snacks low cholesterol, low complex carbohydrate, low sodium, low fat, low sugar.
- ❖ Stakeholders recommended educational information next to the vending machine, to increase awareness.
- ❖ Participants suggested involving management and vending machine association on this kind of initiative.
- ❖ It was mentioned several time that the best way to get the 'buy in' from stakeholders is with sample of other cities or similar initiatives that have proven successful.
- ❖ Different sites uses the vending machine at varies times of the day, for example, the police department uses it 24/7, human resources after 2pm and library services between meals.

## **Focus Group 3**

The participant was a youth center administrator at a Chula Vista recreation center.

- ❖ Middle and high school children are the target group for the center.
- ❖ The administrator was concerned that the vending machines in his sites are reloaded 3 times a week.
- ❖ Vending machines offer sodas, snacks, chocolate milk/Gatorade.
- ❖ The center does not receive much revenue from the vending machines.
- ❖ Ideas that can be implemented in the center are: role modeling, directors, and staff to model healthy eating by bring fruit, vegetables and water to share with children.
- ❖ Other ideas were to provide posters with healthy messages, offer healthy choices, change options on the vending, based on taste test and other activities to include the children, such as, cooking classes, food preparation etc.
- ❖ He considered healthy: fruit and veggies with dressing, water, yogurt, peanut butter with celery and apples.
- ❖ Some strategies that he mentioned for successful healthy vending were:
  - Change the place of vending machine, to a less prominent location.
  - Sale snacks only at certain time of the days.
  - Revise the pricing scale, such as offering healthy snacks are equal or less expensive, introduce new healthy snacks, signage and teach reading the labels.