



Healthy Food Policy: Santa Clara County

Policy Overview

On September 7, 2005, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors adopted a policy mandating nutrition standards for vending machine beverages and snacks in County buildings as well as nutrition standards for purchasing or providing food at county sponsored events or meetings.

The vending policy requires that 50% of food and beverages sold in County vending machines meet nutrition guidelines stipulated in the policy. The beverage standards include water, 100% fruit juice, non-fat and low-fat milk; food standards address fat, trans fats, sugar and sodium issues. Specifically, the vending policy requires:

- 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% standards
- Not more than 10% calories from saturated fat
- Does not contain 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 and fats
- Not more than 360 mg of sodium per serving.

The nutrition standards policy also requires that when food is provided at county meetings and events consideration of reduced fat, salt and sugar items should be made, and when possible, fruit and vegetable options shall be available.

The entire policy is posted on the BANPAC web site under Resources in the Vending Machine Tool Kit.

Key Steps Undertaken to Get Policy Adopted

- As Chair of the Board of Supervisors in 2005, County Supervisor Liz Kniss initiated a focus on health. In May 2005, Supervisor Kniss outlined three specific directions encouraging the promotion of health awareness related to the prevention of overweight, obesity, and diabetes. The County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the following recommendations.

- ✓ Adopt a Resolution encouraging promotion of health awareness in government, community, school, and workplace settings related to prevention of overweight, obesity, and diabetes. Adoption of this Resolution produced an overall commitment to the concept.
- ✓ County Employee Services Agency to develop a Nutrition and Wellness Resource Group as part of the Employee Wellness Program. This will expand and reinforce the concept of a healthy food environment.
- ✓ County Public Health Department to develop policies on nutrition standards for vending as well as standards for purchasing or providing food at County sponsored events or meetings.
- To fulfill its mandate to develop policies, the SCCPHD reviewed vending policies in California, met with the county procurement office to see if any vending policies were already in place, met with the company supplying county vending machines to see what types of changes were possible under the current contract. Health Department staff also consulted with staff of the County Executive and County Supervisor Kniss.
- On Sept. 7, 2005, the SCCPHD presented the policy to the County Board and it was adopted as proposed.

Lessons Learned

- It is a challenge to explain the nutrition standards and the reasons for their adoption in a way the public understands.
- It can be time consuming to get vendors and the County Board of Supervisors to agree to procurement standards.
- It may be necessary to accept a phase-in of the policy. (For example, during year one a policy may require that 25% of the items be healthy options with the percentage increasing in subsequent years.)
- It is important to plan for the promotion, implementation and enforcement of the policy.
- It is advantageous to review other vending policies for innovative provisions and ideas.
- It is helpful to examine the feasibility of a implementing certain provisions of a vending policy. For example, if a policy requires limitations on beverage size can the limitation be met given the design of vending machines in use in the jurisdiction.

Contact Information

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