



# HealthyHoward

## WORKPLACE

### **Introducing a Healthy Vending Policy to Your Workplace**

Creation, Implementation, Evaluation



[Source](#)

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## Purpose

Improving nutrition and increasing physical activity can prevent and control the epidemic of overweight and obesity, as well as decrease the risk of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and asthma. Establishing a policy in support of healthy vending options is an important way to promote wellness at your workplace.

## Why the workplace?

The workplace can play a pivotal role in helping people make healthy lifestyle choices. In particular, employers can encourage healthier eating at the workplace by implementing policies that increase access to healthier food and beverage options. By implementing environmental and systematic changes to promote access to healthier beverages and foods within the workplace, employers play a direct role in promoting health and preventing chronic disease.

There are many justifications for policy change in support of healthy vending. Policies in support of employee health show that employers value the health and well being of their employees. This, in turn, makes for happier, healthier employees, thus reducing absenteeism and increasing morale.

In preparation for creating, implementing and evaluating a vending policy, the following action steps should be considered. And remember, Healthy Howard is here to offer technical assistance. For questions and support, please email [healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov) or call 410-988-3737 ext 53.



[Source](#)

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## Step 1: Identify potential supporters and designate a leader

The first step for implementing a healthy vending policy is to identify potential supporters and designate a leader. Potential supporters within your business will aid in the promotion of this policy as well as tackle challenges that may arise. A leader should be appointed in order to provide direction to the rest of the team, manage the progress and make sure the team adheres to the timeline (See Appendix A: Timeline). To get started, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who will lead this project?
- Which existing groups/committees have an interest in the project?
- Who are the supporters? How can they help you?
- Who is opposed to this project? How can you get them interested?
- How can you create a win/win situation for everyone in your workplace?
- Who are the decision-makers? How can you get them to support the change?
- How can you let everyone know why this is so important?
- Who will create media to support the policy?

Example:

Susan was approached by management to address comments overheard in the break room about lack of healthy choices in the vending machine. Susan was assigned this as part of her job responsibilities and was given a six-month timeframe for making changes that would satisfy staff. With promised support of management, Susan began to plan her approach to this project.



[Source](#)

## Step 2: Assess and identify current environments and/or policies related to the project

This is the most critical step. It will help determine the course of action for the rest of your project. Assessment of the current environment as well as additional policies already in effect will help with the implementation of the policy as well as the evaluation after the policy has been enacted. Prior to the policy being implemented it is advantageous to know how receptive the organization's current environment will be to the policy. After the policy has been enacted, it will be helpful to know the changes that occurred in the organizational environment and if employees are indeed receptive to the policy change. The questions that follow will help guide this process.

- What changes need to be made in the current environment?
- Review policies already in place. Are they monitored and/or enforced?
- Have you met with decision-makers to identify current policies and resources?
- Is a survey or focus group needed to assess interest? (See Appendix C for a survey example)
- Do you have a timeline for each task and assignments for key people?
- Have you conducted a focus group including people who will be affected by the changes?
- Is your plan realistic and reasonable?
- Are you working with public health experts?

Example:

Susan's first step was to assemble a team that included staff from different departments of the workplace, including someone from marketing. Upon learning that no formal policy existed for healthy vending within the company, the team researched and identified existing policies that appeared realistic and reasonable for their workplace. They then designed and sent a survey to staff assessing their buying habits and desires for vending products.

Do you need help designing a survey? Contact [healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov) or call 410-988-3737 ext. 53



[Source](#)

### Step 3: Create and Implement the Policy

Now it's time to create and implement the policy. With the necessary planning and assessment already completed, this should not be a worrisome time. Awareness and communication about the policy is vital. Employees need to understand why a policy is being implemented and how it will affect them. Here is a step-by-step guide to aid in the process:

- Create policy to fit your needs (see Appendix D for an example)
- Solicit edits from other decision-makers and finalize
- Communicate the release of the policy
- Release the policy with help of support staff

Example:

Survey results indicated that staff wanted additional healthy choices in the vending machine. They were particularly concerned about fat content, calories and percentage of sugar in products. Based on the survey and existing policies identified, the committee drafted and released the policy after approval by management. Staff from the marketing department designed promotional materials and these were posted around the building including on the vending machine.

Throughout the process, Susan communicated with management from the vending company and was assured that snack items were available that would meet proposed policy guidelines. The vending company was told that new contracts would include the guidelines soon to be released in the policy and vending items were to meet those nutritional standards.

Do you need help designing a vending policy? Contact [healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov) or call 410-988-3737 ext. 53.

Do you need a suggestion for promotional materials? See Appendix B: Example of a Promotional Flier



[Source 1](#), [Source 2](#)



## Step 4: Measure program outcomes

A step-by-step approach for measuring outcomes will help to determine if the policy achieved the results that were intended. Most outcome measurement plans require that you:

- Choose the outcomes you want to measure
- Specify the indicators that fit your outcomes
- Prepare to collect data on your indicators
- Analyze and report your findings

Example:

Susan and her committee were particularly interested in staff satisfaction with new vending machine items. They were also interested in whether buying habits changed and whether staff saw these changes as management's concern for employee health and wellness.

The committee designed a post-policy survey integrating all agreed upon indicators. With help of the marketing department, the survey was distributed and results collected over a two-week period.

Need help with measuring program outcomes? Help is available! View the “Evaluating Your Workplace Wellness Program” report, accessible via [www.hchealth.org](http://www.hchealth.org).



[Source](#)

## Step 5: Evaluate the policy

After your policy has been in place for a period of 6-12 months, it is appropriate to evaluate the results (discussed further in Appendix A: Timeline). Ask yourself the following questions as you complete the quest for evaluation. These questions will guide your evaluation efforts to determine how to best proceed with healthy vending at your workplace.

- Has a change occurred in the social or economic environment?
- Has a change occurred in the physical environment?
- Has a realistic policy been developed?
- Has a shift occurred in healthy behaviors because of your work?
- Is the policy followed?
- What is not working? Why? Other options?
- Did you reach your outcome(s)?
- What lessons have you learned along the way?
- How have you informed key audiences of progress and changes?
- How have you promoted the project?
- How have you celebrated your success?

Example:

Now that the committee has gathered comments from employees, they see a wide range of opinions and some dissatisfaction as a result of favorite items being removed from the machines. The survey results were released to staff and they were encouraged to continue submitting comments to Susan. Susan worked with the vending company to assure the policy guidelines were met and that certain favorite products were also included in the machine inventory. This ongoing process proved to be less of a challenge than Susan and the committee anticipated as they remained an approachable and open-minded group agreeable to making changes while maintaining compliance with the policy.

Need help evaluating your policy and communicating the results? Help is available! View the “Evaluating Your Workplace Wellness Program” report, accessible via [www.hchealth.org](http://www.hchealth.org).



<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Excellent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Very good
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good
<input type="checkbox"/>	Average
<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor

[Source](#)



## Appendix A: Timeline

*The following timeline is a guide that may not be appropriate for all organizations. You may need to adjust it to meet the needs of your workplace.*

### **9 months before:**

- Ensure support from upper management
- Gather a committee of leaders including those who will cover marketing
- Assess desires/needs of employees; input from staff will help direct products selected for the vending machines
- Talk with vending company about upcoming policy change

### **6 months before:**

- Write the policy and receive approval from management/leadership

### **3 months before:**

- Contact vending company and explain details of policy change. Forward the policy to the company and request list of items that meet policy criteria
- Work with company staff responsible for marketing and employee communication to create messaging
- Identify staff responsible for overseeing machines so they can work with vending staff

### **1 month before:**

- Announce policy change through communication posters on machines, email blast to employees and posting on company website

### **1-3 months post policy:**

- Talk with employees overseeing machines to assess cooperation of vending company.

### **6-9 months post policy:**


- Send survey to employees to assess employee satisfaction
- Make adjustments where appropriate

### **1 year post policy:**

- Work with leaders to evaluate the policy and determine whether goals have been met

## Appendix B: Example of a Promotional Flier


# Fishing for a Healthy Snack?




## Healthy Vending Choices are Here!

- ▶ Making healthy snack choices is important to Howard County employees, according to a recent survey.
- ▶ The Health Department and Wellness Works in Howard County have partnered to implement a *Healthy Vending Policy*.
- ▶ At least 25% of the products in all food and beverage vending machines for County employees must meet certain nutritional criteria.
- ▶ *This means you can make healthier snack choices.*

### Healthy Vending Choices brought to you by...



Howard County Health Department



**Wellness WORKS**  
IN HOWARD COUNTY  
*Live well. Be well.*

## Appendix C: Example of a Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We hope to improve the wellness of employees at our workplace as it has been shown that healthier and happier employees have a decreased risk of chronic disease, lower levels of stress, improved mental health, and improved well-being. In an effort to achieve that goal we hope to create a work environment that better suits your preferences and would like to start with improving the vending machine options. To do this, we need your help in understanding what types of foods you currently buy and would be interested in buying, if given the opportunity. Your answers are essential to improving our healthy vending options!

*Please answer the following questions as honestly and accurately as you can. This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete. Your answers will remain anonymous.*

### **Workplace Vending Habits:**

*We would like to know your workplace eating habits to improve the current workplace vending options. Even if you do not buy from vending machines at work, please continue to answer the questions to the best of your ability.*

1. Eating a healthy diet and making healthy food choices are important to me.
  - ☐ I Strongly Agree
  - ☐ I Agree
  - ☐ I neither Agree nor Disagree
  - ☐ I Disagree
  - ☐ I Strongly Disagree
  
2. The Nutritional value of the food is a concern to me when I buy from the vending machine.
  - ☐ I Strongly Agree
  - ☐ I Agree
  - ☐ I neither Agree nor Disagree
  - ☐ I Disagree
  - ☐ I Strongly Disagree
  
3. Which of the following statements most closely fits with your priorities when buying from the vending machine at work:
  - ☐ Cost is most important to me, and I buy the cheapest item regardless of its nutritional value.
  - ☐ Cost is important, but so is health so I look for the healthier option among the cheapest foods.
  - ☐ Nutrition is important and I buy the healthiest item regardless of the cost.
  - ☐ Neither cost nor health is an issue for me. I buy whatever I am in the mood for.
  
4. I buy from the vending machine at work...
  - ☐ More than once a day
  - ☐ Once every day
  - ☐ About 3 days a week
  - ☐ About 1 day a week
  - ☐ Rarely (less than once a month)
  - ☐ Never
  
5. If you rarely or never buy from vending machines at work, it is because ...(please check all that apply)
  - ☐ The items are too expensive.

- ☐ I don't like the options.
- ☐ I prefer to bring from home.
- ☐ I have food allergies.
- ☐ Other (please explain)\_\_\_\_\_

6. When you visit the vending machine, what time of the day do you usually go?
- ☐ In the morning (9am-11am) as breakfast or a morning snack
  - ☐ Lunch (11am-2pm)
  - ☐ Afternoon snack (2pm-4pm)
  - ☐ Dinner (5pm or later)
  - ☐ Other (i.e. work shift hours)
  - ☐ N/A because I do not buy from the vending machine

### **Food Options:**

*Vending machines can be filled with a variety of food options. We would like to know what food you would be interested in having in our machine.*

7. Please rank the following types of food in order of preference. Put a (1) next to the item you are most likely to buy and a (5) next to the item you are least likely to buy. Please use each number only **once**.  
Treats:

- \_\_\_ Chocolate candy bar
- \_\_\_ Cookies
- \_\_\_ M & Ms
- \_\_\_ Non chocolate candies (e.g. skittles, twizzlers)
- \_\_\_ Bakery treats (e.g. tasty cakes, rice krispies, danishes)

Snacks:

- \_\_\_ Regular Potato chips
- \_\_\_ Baked Chips (e.g. Sun chips)
- \_\_\_ Pretzels
- \_\_\_ Crackers ( e.g. Peanut butter crackers)
- \_\_\_ Cheese flavored chips/snacks (e.g. Cheetos)

Drinks:

- \_\_\_ Regular soda
- \_\_\_ Decaffeinated regular soda
- \_\_\_ Diet soda
- \_\_\_ Decaffeinated diet soda
- \_\_\_ Bottled water

8. Please rank the following types of food in order of preference. Put a (1) next to the item you are most likely to buy and a (6) next to the item you are least likely to buy. Please use each number only **once**.  
Healthy treats:

- \_\_\_ Granola bars
- \_\_\_ Dark chocolate

- \_\_\_ York Peppermint Patties
- \_\_\_ 3 Musketeers bars
- \_\_\_ Fruit snacks (e.g. Welch's Fruit Snacks)
- \_\_\_ Animal crackers

Assorted Snacks:

- \_\_\_ 100 calorie pack snacks
- \_\_\_ Flavored Rice Cakes
- \_\_\_ Reduced Calorie popcorn
- \_\_\_ Dried fruit
- \_\_\_ Trail mix/nuts
- \_\_\_ Canned fruit

Drinks:

- \_\_\_ Regular iced tea
- \_\_\_ Diet iced tea
- \_\_\_ 100% apple juice
- \_\_\_ 100% orange juice
- \_\_\_ 100% cranberry juice
- \_\_\_ Flavored water

9. What types of new food options would you be likely to buy from the vending machine? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Refrigerated items (e.g. yogurt)
- ☐ Fresh fruit
- ☐ Energy bars
- ☐ Lunch items (e.g. prepackaged tuna fish with crackers, mini sandwiches)
- ☐ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

10. Would a product labeled as "healthy" influence your decision to select it?

- ☐ Yes, I try to purchase "healthy" labeled snacks.
- ☐ No, I do not take that into consideration when purchasing my food.
- ☐ No, I do not know what those labels mean.

**Additional Information:**

*Please tell us any additional information regarding food options and vending machines that you feel would be important in improving the health of you and your colleagues.*

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***Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey!***

## Appendix D: Example of a Healthy Vending Policy

This policy may be amended from time to time when new reference material becomes available that may have a direct impact on additional healthy options that are available within vending machines. The following is extracted from a full policy implemented by Howard County Government in 2010. For additional information on policy guidelines and implementation, please contact [healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov).

### Nutrition Standards for Vending Machine Beverages and Snacks

- A. Beverages: 25% of beverages offered in a vending machine shall be from the following categories:
- i. Water;
  - ii. Unsweetened coffee or tea;
  - iii. Nonfat or 1% milk (including soy or cow's milk, and chocolate or other flavored milk);
  - iv. 100% fruit/vegetable juice; Fruit-based drinks containing 100% fruit juice and no added caloric sweeteners; and
  - v. If the above options are not feasible, non-caloric beverages (including diet sodas and teas) may be substituted.
- B. Snacks/food: 25% of the snacks/foods offered in a vending machine shall meet all of the following criteria:
- i. Not more than 35% percent of calories shall be from fat with the exception of products composed entirely or primarily of nuts and seeds;
  - ii. Not more than 10% of calories shall be from saturated fat;
  - iii. Shall not contain trans fats that are added during processing (hydrogenated oils and partially hydrogenated oils);
  - iv. Shall not contain more than 360 milligrams of sodium per serving; and
  - v. Shall not contain more than 250 calories in the package.

## References

Healthy Maine Partnerships. (March 2004). Develop policies that support healthy options in vending machines: action packet. Retrieved from [http://www.healthymainepartnerships.org/panp/site/226-008-04\\_kit.pdf](http://www.healthymainepartnerships.org/panp/site/226-008-04_kit.pdf).

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