HEALTHY BITES, HEALTHY WORKSITES

A Resource Guide for Implementing Healthy Eating in the Workplace

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT! And, so are the employees at your worksite. The Health & Wellness Coalition of Wichita presents this resource guide with an objective to assist employers in understanding their role in creating organizations that advocate for healthy foods for their employees. Food is fuel for your body. Eating healthier foods can impact good health by improving mood, combating diseases and boosting energy.

Sample policies for worksite food and vending have been provided with this guide to assist organizations in transitioning to healthier and supportive work environments for their employees. Whether your site adopts one or both of these sample policies, the Health & Wellness Coalition of Wichita is here to serve as a FREE resource.

Why Worksites?

Most people spend a greater percentage of their lives at work than they do at home or doing other activities. Since organizations have the ability to greatly influence behavior through their culture and work environments, the call to action for employers to find ways to adopt and implement wellness programs is growing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, overweight and obese employees are more costly for employers in numerous ways:

- Employees who are obese tend to have lower productivity and performance levels; use more sick days; and are more likely to need more prescribed medication.
- There is a greater increase in the onset of diseases including Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers.
- Employees who are obese will likely increase health care costs, with current costs ranging from an estimated $147 billion to nearly $210 billion per year in the United States [1, 6].

SUCCESS STORY: TEXTRON AVIATION

Textron Aviation provides healthy vending options for its employees and uses reverse pricing. All of the healthier items in the vending machines are sold at a reduced cost while raising the prices of the unhealthier items. Everything is packaged in single serving portions. This practice, along with transitioning to more micro markets instead of vending, allows Textron Aviation to offer fresh items to their employees.

A Solution

Implementing healthy eating in a supportive work environment is a practical and effective way to invest in the overall wellbeing of all employees. Doing so would benefit employers by improving employee attendance and productivity. It could also potentially increase the morale of employees, making them more likely to remain loyal and stay with the organization.

In addition to improving employee satisfaction, incorporating healthy eating guidelines and policies would reduce health care costs. Changing the culture to include healthy eating, is not only a nice "add in," but it can become a part of the strategic plan [3].

The Importance of Policies for Healthy Eating in the Workplace

Polices in the workplace impact the whole organization and set the standard for how that organization will operate. Setting expectations through healthy food policies would encourage awareness and accountability in healthy eating for the organization as a whole and would increase the potential to impact individual employees.

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A policy is valuable in the workplace in a number of ways:

- It secures multilevel support throughout an organization.
- The supportive environment makes it easier for employees to adopt those healthier standards for themselves.
- A policy has the potential to make the healthy standard sustainable.
- It provides the framework to develop potential wellness programs that include rationale, expected outcomes, and available resources.
- It becomes a community effort done at the organizational level (7).

For a policy to be effective, it must be designed to influence the organization to help determine its direction and decision making. Aspects of an effective policy include a written document that:

- Is easily accessible for employees to reference.
- Is concise and easy to understand.
- Is consistently enforced.
- Is frequently revisited, reviewed, and updated as needed.
- Accomplishes goals of healthy worksite wellness efforts and program development (7).

SUCCESS STORY: FIDELITY BANK

Fidelity Bank has implemented healthy eating standards in meeting guidelines, new hire orientations, and a vending contract providing fresh market items in breakrooms. Fresh fruit is delivered weekly to the corporate office and branches for employees to enjoy free of charge. Lunch 'n' learns are offered with a cooking demonstration, healthy lunches, and a free weekly email subscription to receive recipes and health updates.

How to Implement Healthy Eating

Adding healthier options and opting out of the unhealthier ones may be challenging for a business but it can be achieved with booming success.

SUCCESS STORY: MEDOVA HEALTHCARE FINANCIAL GROUP, LLC

Medova Healthcare Financial Group, LLC has transitioned their vending machines to include items that utilize nutrition guidelines. In addition, the employee events committee often caters food to the employees, keeping the health and wellness initiatives in mind as selections are made.

Some ways changes can be made are:

- Updating meeting guidelines for catering to include healthy options, such as fruit in place of desserts.
- Creating a healthy food policy for meeting guidelines, catering guidelines, and break room vending options.
- Contracting with a vending company that offers healthy options for break time and lunch periods.
- Offering only water, coffee, or tea at new hire orientations, meetings, or other company events.
- Opting out of using food as a departmental reward for special occasions and finding a nonfood replacement.

References:

1. Adult Obesity Facts. (2015). Retrieved June 16, 2016, from http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html
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5. Smart Snacks in School: USDA's All Foods Sold in Schools Standards. (2016). United States Department of Agriculture.
6. The Healthcare Costs of Obesity. (2016). Retrieved July 06, 2016, from http://stateofobesity.org/healthcare-costs-obesity/
7. The Importance of Policies for Healthy Eating in the Workplace. Adapted from Why Worksite Wellness Works. Health ICT. (25 May 2016). Retrieved 7 July 2016.

Support Counts

A supportive work environment assists employees in improving their health and wellbeing and is an essential factor in increasing employees' productivity levels and decreasing obesity-related diseases.

Since employees spend most of their time at work, the constant encouragement to choose healthy options in food, whether in meetings or on the go from a vending machine, does have an impact on their productivity and overall health.

Adding a worksite wellness committee or a comprehensive worksite wellness program encourages employee participation, structured goals, and budgeting to carry out the needs of the organization. Creating a place where employees can be involved in the process with open communication is vital for the transition to be a success.

SAMPLE HEALTHY EVENT FOODS POLICY

Sample policy to be used for corporate events, catered meetings, and new hire orientations [2].

Whereas:
(Organization's name here) is concerned about the health of our (employees, members);

Whereas:
People have become more and more interested in eating healthy and moving more;

Whereas:
Heart disease, cancer and stroke are largely affected by what we eat and how active we are;

Whereas:
Foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and pastas, and low-fat dairy products are better choices for preventing many diseases.

Therefore:
Effective (today's date), it is the policy of (fill in your organization's name) that all activities and events (examples may include: meetings, potluck events, catered events) sponsored or supported by this organization will always include opportunities for healthy foods and beverages by:

- Purchasing and serving one or more fruits and/or vegetables with each meal or snack.
  Examples include fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruits (such as oranges, apples, raisins or 100% fruit juices), and fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables.
- Providing water, unsweetened tea, or unsweetened coffee as the drink of choice.
  Refrain from providing sugar-sweetened beverages, sodas, sports drinks, lemonades, etc.
- Providing encouragement from group leadership to enjoy healthy foods.
  Examples include community promotion of healthy lifestyles, group leadership being role models for healthy food choices.

Signature	Title
Name of Organization	Date

SAMPLE HEALTHY VENDING POLICY

Sample policy for use by organizations regarding vending at their worksites (4, 5).

Whereas:
(Organization's name here) is concerned about the health of our (employees, members);

Whereas:
People have become more and more interested in eating healthy and moving more;

Whereas:
Heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers are largely affected by what we eat and how active we are;

Whereas:
Snack food products that are lower in fat and sugar content are better choices in disease prevention.

Therefore:
Effective (today's date), it is the policy of (your organization) that all snack and beverage vending offered by (your organization) will always include items meeting the following standards.

Recommendation is to start at 50% in each area with an incremental goal of becoming 100% over time.

FOOD STANDARDS

At least _____% of foods served in vending machines must meet these standards which align with school nutrition standards for snacks:

- Have snack items $\leq$ 200 calories
- Have $\leq$ 35% of calories from total fat (excludes nuts/seeds, nut butters; and reduced fat and part-skim mozzarella cheese)
- Have $\leq$ 200 mg of sodium
- Have $\leq$ 35% sugar by weight (excludes dried whole fruits or vegetables)
- Contain no trans fat
- < 10% calories from saturated fat

  * *Products consisting of only dried fruit with nut and/or seeds and no added sweetener (unless sweetener required for palatability such as dried cranberries or tart cherries) or fats are exempt from fat and sugar standards.*

BEVERAGE STANDARDS

At least _____% of beverages served in vending machines must meet one or a combination of these standards:

- Plain water
- Beverages containing 100% fruit or vegetable juice (or those diluted with non carbonated water); with no added sweeteners, preferably $\leq$ 12 oz.
- Unflavored nonfat or 1% low fat milk, preferably $\leq$ 12 oz. (or nutritionally equivalent milk alternatives).
- Flavored water or carbonated beverages $\leq$ 40 calories per 8 oz. or $\leq$ 60 calories per 12 oz.

PRICING AND PLACEMENT STANDARDS

- Beverage and food items meeting standards must be sold at an equivalent price or lower than other items in vending machine.
- Items meeting above standards must be placed in the top third of vending machine so products are at eye level.

This sample is based on school nutrition guidelines approved by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Signature _____   Title _____

Name of Organization _____   Date _____

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