



Healthy Beverage Hot Spots

Identifying and Utilizing the Institutional Access Points

A key step in developing an effective healthy beverage program is to conduct an assessment of the beverage environment in the organization. An organizational [assessment](#) provides important information about where, how, and what drinks are available within a healthcare facility. In general, beverages are offered through five types of locations or access points:

- Retailers/cafeterias
- Vending machines
- Catering/Procurement for meetings and events
- Patient services
- On-site contracted venues/concessions (such as Au Bon Pain, Dunkin' Donuts, McDonald's)

Each location presents unique opportunities and challenges. The assessment results — and the greater understanding of the beverage access points gained through the process — can and should be used to tailor implementation strategies appropriately for each type of access point. Health Care Without Harm has created a [Healthy Beverage Audit Tool](#) that could be used to support assessment efforts. Considerations relating to each type of access point are summarized below.



The Public Health Law Center has created a series of resources designed to inform and support efforts to promote healthy beverage choices within Minnesota workplace settings, with a special focus on healthcare. This fact sheet identifies the key points of access to drinks within a healthcare facility.

Retailers/Cafeterias

A cafeteria's transition to healthier beverages depends in large part on whether the facility's retail food services are self-operated or contract-managed by an outside company. If the facility contracts for these services, then the contract should be reviewed for any existing requirements or standards because they may already provide some flexibility in making food and beverage orders.

Cafeterias are excellent sites for point-of-decision signage to educate consumers about healthy beverage choices and promote water consumption. They are also ideal venues for implementing pricing strategies for organizations aiming to reduce sugary drink purchases. One study found that in a hospital cafeteria, increasing the price of soft drinks reduced their consumption by 26%, but that a *combination* of price increase and education decreased consumption by 36%.¹ Revenue from price increases on sugary drinks can be used to help offset lower prices for healthy options such as water or unflavored milk.

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Vending Machines

Vending machines are also an important point of access to foods and beverages on-site, particularly for staff and visitors. Changing an institution's vending policy to increase healthy beverage options is an effective and realistic step towards changing the beverage landscape within that institution..

A number of organizations provide helpful online resources (including sample policies and nutritional standards) to support the development of a healthy vending machine policy:

- Association of State & Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors, [Healthy Vending Machine Sales Data](#).²
- Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative (BANPAC) [Vending Machine Toolkit](#).³
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [LEAN Works — Workplace Obesity Prevention](#).⁴
- Center for Science in the Public Interest, [Healthier Food Choices for Public Places](#).⁵
- ChangeLab Solutions, [Healthier Vending for Municipalities webpage](#).⁶
- Iowa Health Department's [Nutrition Environment Measures — Vending \(NEMS-V\)](#).⁷
- Kaiser Permanente, [Healthy Picks](#) (2005).⁸
- Nemours Health and Prevention Services, [Healthy Vending Guide](#) (2010).⁹
- Seattle & King County Public Health Department, [Healthy Vending Guidelines](#) (2011).¹⁰

Catering/Procurement for Events and Meetings

The inherent flexibility of catering programs makes them ideal candidates for healthy beverage implementation. Rather than making unhealthy beverages the standard or sole offering, catering menus should feature healthy options such as filtered tap water, sparkling water, unsweetened tea or coffee, or other beverages covered by the policy. More facilities are offering water infused with fruit and/or herbs as an elegant beverage option that promotes

increased water consumption. A facility might choose to offer minimally pre-sweetened beverages upon request, but ensure that these items are not displayed in the serving area or on the menu. Utilizing reusable cups and beverage containers for pourable service can also greatly reduce waste and generate a larger profit margin than bottled beverage options. To encourage consistent ordering while also managing costs and revenues, a policy may require all external catering requests to be approved by the Food Service Director or other appropriate staff.

Some public and private institutions have developed nutrition standards for beverages purchased with institutional funds and served at the institution's meetings and events. This is another way to demonstrate to employees and visitors that the institution supports healthy beverage choices.

It is important to clearly specify what is covered under the policy. For example, procurement guidelines may address beverages:

- Purchased with institutional funds and served at institution-sponsored meetings and events.
- Purchased with outside funds but served at institution-sponsored meetings and events.
- Purchased for off-site meetings and events sponsored or hosted by the organization.
- Purchased for special events on institutional property.
- Sold on institution property for charitable fundraising efforts.
- Marketed or promoted on vending machines or coolers, or through promotions or special events on institutional property.

Dealing with the Fine Print

Many institutions contract with vendors who supply food and beverages, stock vending machines, run their cafeterias or gift shops, or cater meetings and events. Some concessioners lease space and operate small cafés or even franchise restaurants on institutional property. These contracts can present both speed bumps and openings when implementing healthy beverage policies.

The terms and time periods for these contracts should be reviewed and factored into implementation plans.

What does the contract say about choices?

- Some contracts provide flexibility in food and beverage product selections.
- If so, the institution may be able to order healthy choices without amending the contract.

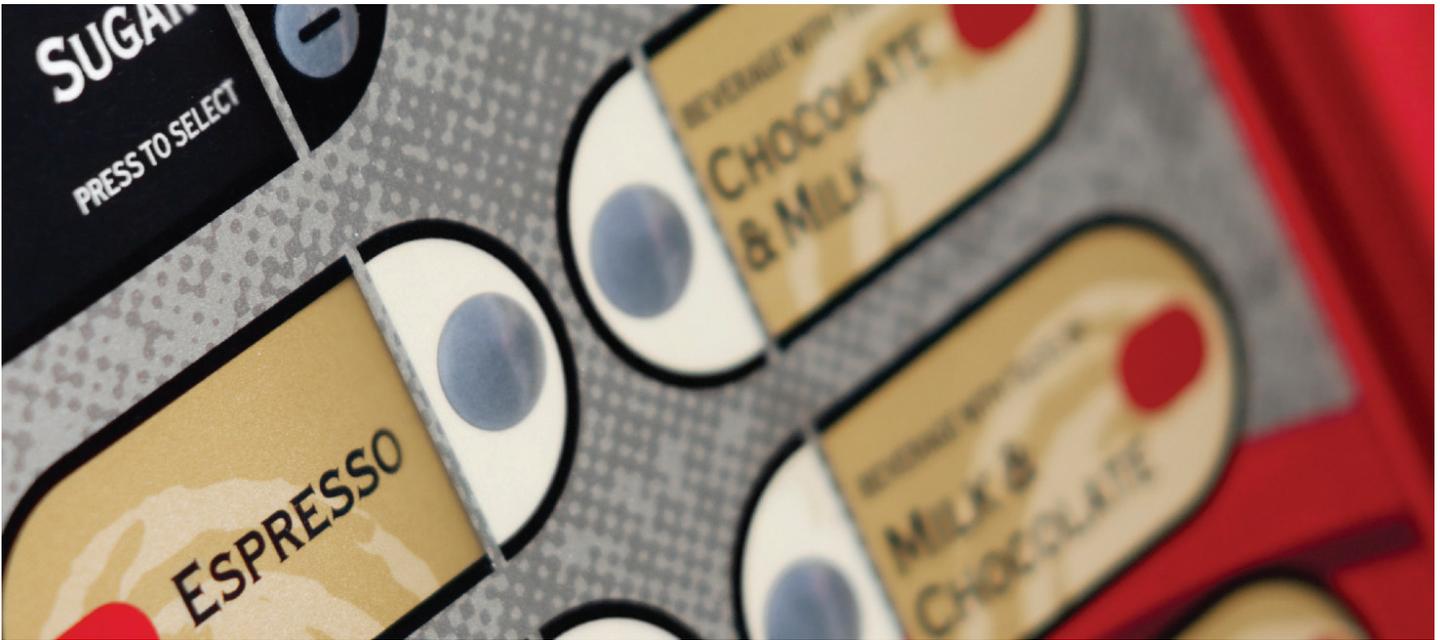
When does the contract end?

- Renewal periods present a good opportunity to amend contract terms or shop for new vendors.
- The time leading up to the end date can be a good time to kick-off an educational campaign to build support for the new policy.

What happens if different contracts end at different times?

- Consider extending some of the contracts so that they all end at the same time.
- Take advantage of the different dates to do a staggered implementation plan.
- Use an incentive or buy-out to implement broad change sooner.

Being aware of these contracting issues can help in developing an implementation plan that is as efficient and effective as possible.



The policy should also clarify whether the guidelines apply to potluck lunches, birthday parties, or other events on institutional property.

When transitioning to a healthy beverage policy, existing procurement and catering contracts can create challenges for implementing immediate changes. The following are examples of guidelines for healthy meetings and events created by both public and private organizations.

- University of Minnesota, [School of Public Health: Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars, and Catered Events](#)¹¹
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts: [Healthy Meeting and Event Guide](#)¹²
- UC Berkeley: [Healthy Meeting and Events webpage](#)¹³ (includes a guide for meetings and events, and sample shopping lists)

Patient Trays in Hospitals

Patient food delivery is a critical component of the hospital food environment. Reducing access to

sugary drinks in patient services demonstrates a commitment to the overall health of patients. This approach may be accomplished through voluntary compliance by a food service contractor without the need for a contract change because of the direct connection to patient health. Hospitals can specify in their policies whether sugary drinks will be available to patients upon special circumstances or with a formal request from a physician or dietitian.

On-Site Contracted Venues/Concessions

On-site concessioners can range from small cafés to franchise restaurants licensed to serve on the premises. When transitioning to healthier beverages, leases and agreements for concessions need to be reviewed beforehand. The contract terms can influence the timeframe for implementing a new concessions policy. For existing contracts, unless it is possible to obtain the vendor's compliance (either voluntarily or through incentives), an organization may choose to make changes when the contract expires. Waiting until the current contracts expire may minimize conflict and provides an opportunity to implement an education campaign before changes

are visible. When an institution has a number of contracts of varying duration, it is not uncommon to extend some of the concessions contracts so that all concessions transition at the same time.

When developing an implementation plan and timeline, consider which locations are likely to offer the greatest potential for positive change, as well as those which may be amenable to immediate changes.

Conclusion

While the goal is to create a healthy beverage policy that is consistently applied across the entire organization, an implementation plan may target only some of these access points, and/or it may phase in changes at different locations over time. Some access points may be more conducive to a rapid change, and some may allow for greater impact on purchasing choices. When developing an [implementation plan](#) and timeline, consider which locations are likely to offer the greatest potential

for positive change, as well as those which may be amenable to immediate changes.

Additional Resources

This and other fact sheets and case studies in this series can be found on the Public Health Law Center's website at www.publichealthlawcenter.org and Health Care Without Harm's website at www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org.

The [Commons Health Hospital Challenge program](#), led by the Institute for a Sustainable Future, also has resources and technical assistance geared towards communities, clinicians and Minnesota hospitals committed to leading obesity prevention efforts in their communities. Health Care Without Harm, through its national [Healthy Food in Health Care Program](#), provides technical assistance and educational programming to support a national network of healthcare organizations in creating healthy food and beverage environments in their facilities. The [American Heart Association](#) also has several [policy position statements](#) on obesity prevention, and related resources to support healthy food and beverage environments in a variety of settings.

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The Public Health Law Center provides information and technical assistance on issues related to public health. The Center does not provide legal representation or advice. This document should not be considered legal advice. For specific legal questions, consult with an attorney.

Endnotes

- ¹ Jason P. Block et al., *Point-of-Purchase Price and Education Intervention to Reduce Consumption of Sugary Soft Drinks*, 100 AM. J. PUB. HEALTH 1427 (2010).
- ² http://astphnd.org/resource_read.php?resource_id=225&sid=a9cb71&origin=&category (includes a collection of data and resources on the financial impact of healthy vending policies).
- ³ http://www.banpac.org/healthy_vending_machine_toolkit.htm#Assessment (includes a variety of resources to help with bidding and contracting for a new vendor, as well as sample policies).
- ⁴ <http://www.cdc.gov/leanworks/resources/tools.html> (provides links to a variety of resources to promote worksite wellness programs, including healthy vending guidelines).
- ⁵ <http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/foodstandards.html> (provides links to resources on nutrition guidelines for government, worksites hospitals, and other organizations).
- ⁶ <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/healthier-vending-municipalities> (includes a guide for developing a healthy vending policy for municipalities and a model healthy snack and beverage vending agreement).
- ⁷ <http://www.nems-v.com/> (has a website with sample nutrition standards and purchasing policies, vending policy toolkit, and success stories).
- ⁸ http://www.iha.org/pdfs_documents/related_resources/02HealthyAlternativesEvaluation.pdf (this is an evaluation of the Integrated Healthcare Association's Healthy Alternatives Vending Program for employers, and includes lessons learned to promote program success).
- ⁹ <http://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/preventive/nhps/resource/healthyvending.pdf> (provides sample healthy vending guidelines, policies, and marketing strategies).
- ¹⁰ <http://www.kingcounty.gov/employees/HealthMatters/PersonalHealth/EatSmart/TakeAction/AtWork.aspx> (this page includes a link to vending guidelines developed by King County Public Health Department, for use in county facilities and for voluntary adoption by organizations in the county).
- ¹¹ <http://www.sph.umn.edu/pdf/news/pubs/NutritionGuide2009.pdf>.
- ¹² <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/nutrition-phys-activity/healthy-meeting-event-guide.pdf>.
- ¹³ <http://uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/healthmatters/healthymeetings.shtml>.