HEALTHY FOOD PROCUREMENT IN THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

INTENT OF THE INTERVENTION

In 2011, the County of Los Angeles (“County”) Board of Supervisors adopted Healthy Food Promotion in Los Angeles County Food Service Contracts, a motion aimed at County departmental food procurement policies and practices as they relate to nutrition. The motion established a process for the County’s Department of Public Health to develop nutrition standards and/or healthy food procurement practices in new and renewing Requests for Proposals (RFP) for food service and vending contracts across County departments. Since the proposed motion was adopted as a policy by vote, the Center TRT is disseminating it as a practice-tested institutional policy.

The institutional policy addresses multiple levels of the socio-ecologic model. The primary focus is on the organizational level as all County departments are required, to the extent feasible, to incorporate nutrition recommendations and food service requirements into their RFPs for new and renewing food service and vending contracts. Additionally, the policy changes the food procurement system to influence individual choice by increasing access to healthier foods and beverages through modifications on menus and in the food environment.

OVERVIEW

By creating a healthier food environment in County government food venues and programs, the Board of Supervisors used its purchasing power to positively affect quality of life issues associated with overweight and obesity among County employees, patrons who purchase food and beverages from County operated food venues, and populations to whom the County distributes meals (e.g., youth, seniors, and incarcerated individuals). Once the healthy food procurement initiative is fully implemented, county venues and programs will become model healthy food environments.

The 2011 motion authorized two important procedural features: 1) all County departments involved in food and/or beverage procurement, their sales or distribution are required to include food service requirements (i.e., nutrition standards and practices that promote healthy foods), to the extent feasible, in their new or renewing RFPs (i.e., selection process for food service/vending contracts); and 2) the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) is appointed as the coordinating agency for the healthy food procurement initiative, including reviewer and technical assistance responsibilities.

To effectively coordinate this initiative, a DPH staff member interviews representatives from each County department to learn more about their food service practices and discuss their specific departmental needs in order to effectively operate a particular food venue. These meetings are designed to lead to a greater understanding of the complex food services landscape that comprises the County of Los Angeles. For example, the departments sell or distribute food and beverages to different populations in a variety of settings, such as older adults at community centers or parks, children in summer and afterschool programs, and County employees in worksite cafeterias. Additionally, contract timelines and details vary significantly among departments.
After the initial interview and assessment, each department’s procurement procedures for food service and vending contracting became more well-defined. This helped to prepare staff at DPH to provide technical support to each department, including development of nutrition standards for each food service RFP, and development of quality improvement plans, provision of social marketing materials and training, and troubleshooting of implementation barriers.

**Setting:** Retail food and beverage venues (i.e., cafeterias, vending machines, snack shops) and programs that offer or distribute food to dependent populations (i.e., jails, probation halls/camps, hospitals, etc.).

**Target population:** County of Los Angeles employees, patrons who purchase food and beverages from County food venue sites, and populations to whom the County distributes meals (e.g. youth, seniors, patients, and incarcerated individuals)

**Length of time in the field:** Since the passage of the motion in March 2011.

**HEALTH EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Los Angeles County is one of the largest and most diverse counties in the United States. Consequently, the adoption of the Healthy Food Promotion in Los Angeles County Food Service Contracts motion has the potential to reach a broad audience. Almost ten million people live in Los Angeles County. As of 2010, approximately 48% of the population is Hispanic or Latino, 28% is non-Hispanic white, 14% is Asian, and 10% is Black. The percent of foreign-born residents in this jurisdiction was 35.6% during 2007-2011. During the same time period, about 16% of county residents lived below the poverty line. Almost 23% of children in grades 5, 7, and 9 were obese (BMI >95th percentile). Nearly 36% of adults were overweight (BMI between 25 and 29.9), and another 22% were obese (BMI ≥30).

As an institutional policy, it specifically targets County employees (the County currently employs more than 100,000 individuals); patrons who purchase food and beverages at County venues, and populations whose meals are provided by County of Los Angeles food venues and programs. The County distributes meals to youth, seniors, patients, and incarcerated individuals; populations who are at greater risk for obesity and poverty. Once the institutional policy is fully implemented, DPH estimates that it will affect nearly 37 million meals offered/served in various County settings per year.

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2 Healthy Food Procurement in the County of Los Angeles participated in the Pre-Evaluation Assessments of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Programs and Policies project, a collaborative effort of the CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity and ICF International. 2012.
CORE ELEMENTS

This section outlines the aspects of an intervention that are central to its theory and logic and that are thought to be responsible for the intervention’s effectiveness. Core elements are critical features of the intervention’s intent and design and should be kept intact when the intervention is implemented or adapted.

1. Institutional policy should include evidence-based nutrition standards, as well as strategies for promoting healthy food and beverages.
2. Institutional policy should designate an organization or formal group to coordinate implementation of new nutrition standards and other promotion strategies.
3. The coordinating organization should consult with stakeholders whom the institutional policy will impact, such as food service vendors and department leadership in charge of food service contracts. This step must precede policy implementation.
4. The coordinating organization should have adequate resources to oversee institutional policy implementation, including sufficient resources to offer ongoing technical assistance and evaluation.
5. An organization or formal group should be authorized to evaluate and monitor the institutional policy or system change. In Los Angeles County, the coordinating organization (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health) also serves as the entity that evaluates and monitors policy implementation.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Funding for the initiative initially came from CDC’s Communities Putting Prevention to Work cooperative agreement (2010-2012), with additional support from the Sodium Reduction in Communities Program (2010-2013). Part of the County’s Community Transformation Grant award will support the healthy food procurement initiative’s expansion, with sustained activities through 2016.

Staff: Approximately 2.5 FTE DPH staff support the healthy food procurement initiative including a program manager who oversees the day-to-day operations of the initiative and nearly 2 FTE staff from DPH’s Research & Evaluation unit to support program evaluation. The Division’s Nutrition and Physical Activity program has two registered dieticians who also support the healthy food procurement initiative.

Materials: To facilitate successful implementation, DPH has created a series of implementation guides to be used by County staff and vendors dealing with food purchasing. These guides are intended to serve as implementation aides, whereas the actual nutritional requirements are outlined in the individual contracts that are agreed upon between the specific County department and the food service vendors selected though the RFP process. DPH has also developed an overview “Creating Healthy Food Environments” issue brief and promotional signage for cafeteria environments such as table tents and signage to promote healthier menu items.

Other Costs: The healthy food procurement initiative required start-up costs for signage, promotional education materials, and the development of adoption aids, implementation guides, and program evaluation protocols. In addition, other indirect costs included “in-kind”
expertise from members of an advisory committee which oversaw strategic planning for the initiative.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

How It Works:

1) **Formative Work**
   Conduct a needs assessment to identify facilitators and barriers to healthy food and beverage consumption
   Before providing the County Board of Supervisors with a menu of policy options and evidence-based recommendations, DPH identified the facilitators and barriers to adopting a proposed procurement policy that would require food vendors contracting with County departments to meet specified nutrition standards, including limits on calories, sugar, and sodium. To comprehensively identify the key considerations for operationalizing nutrition standards, DPH conducted key informant interviews with County departments and organizations that purchased, distributed, or sold food. The facilitators and barriers identified through these interviews were used to help inform the overall institutional policy redesign on healthy food procurement.

   Use needs assessment findings to inform potential options to intervene at the organizational-level to promote healthy eating
   DPH’s assessment findings revealed an opportunity to reach hundreds of thousands of County employees, department office patrons, and individuals to whom the County provides food and beverages through organizational-level changes. They provided guidance to food vendors about what foods and beverages to offer and how to place and price healthy foods and beverages in various food venue settings.

   Provide education and technical advice to stakeholders and decision-makers on institutional policy content, including nutrition standards and product placement/pricing options, when requested
   At the request of decision-makers in the County, DPH reviewed nutrition guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other federal/state/local agencies to develop a list of nutrition standards designed to promote health and prevent disease among consumers. DPH also suggested other food standard requirements, such as pricing and product placement strategies, which are supported by behavioral economics theory and shown to be effective in similar settings. The decision-makers then integrated these DPH recommendations, to the extent feasible, as contractual language in food service and vending Requests for Proposals (RFP) or Invitation for Bids (IFB).

2) **Inform Institutional Policy for System Change**
   Establish Policy Contents
   - *Responsibilities of coordinating organization* - The 2011 motion designated DPH as the coordinating organization for program implementation. In preparation for program launch, DPH Health Officer sent a letter to all County departments explaining the motion’s requirements and requesting that each department identify a representative

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to meet with DPH staff for an interview. This letter provided clarity on DPH’s role during implementation of the institutional policy.

- **Food service requirements** – The County of Los Angeles' institutional policy stipulates that all new Requests for Proposals (RFPs) include Food Service Requirements (i.e., nutrition recommendations). Food vendors are eligible for County RFPs only if they choose to comply with the Food Service Requirements. According to DPH, food vendors were willing to cooperate by agreeing to supply products that meet the standards. Moreover, DPH personnel noted that food vendors recognize a growing demand across the country for healthy food and beverage options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Category</th>
<th>Food Category Standards</th>
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| **Entrée**                    | ▪ Require at least 50% of entrées\(^5\) meet the following nutrition standards:  
  o No more than 35% of calories from fat.  
  o No more than 10% of calories from saturated fat.  
  o 0g trans fat.  
  o No more than 500 calories.  
  o No more than 600 mg of sodium.  
  ▪ **Recommend** at least one vegetarian entrée per meal service.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| **Side Item**                 | ▪ Require at least 50% of side items\(^6\) meet the following nutrition standards:  
  o No more than 35% of calories from fat.  
  o No more than 10% of calories from saturated fat.  
  o 0g trans fat.  
  o No more than 250 calories.  
  o No more than 360 mg of sodium.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| **Snacks/Desserts**           | ▪ Require at least 50% of snacks/desserts\(^7\) meet the following nutrition standards:  
  o No more than 35% of calories from fat (excluding legumes, nuts, nut butters, seeds, eggs, non-fried vegetables, and cheese packaged for individual sale).  
  o No more than 10% of calories from saturated fat (excluding eggs and cheese packaged for individual sale).  
  o 0g trans fat.  
  o No more than 35% sugar by weight (with the exception of fruits and vegetables).                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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\(^5\) Entrées are menu options presented as main dishes, such as omelets, pancakes, meats/fish, pastas, sandwiches, or specialty salads.

\(^6\) Side items are menu options presented as side dishes, such as rice, bread/rolls, potatoes, beans, soup, side salads, fruits and vegetables.

\(^7\) Snacks/desserts refer to packaged or portioned items not presented as entrées or side items and include chips, crackers, pretzels, trail mix, granola bars, yogurt, bakery items, pudding, ice cream, and fresh or processed fruits and vegetables.
| Condiments | Require at least two healthy salad dressing options, including one low-sodium, low-calorie, low-fat, cholesterol-free creamy salad dressing and one vinaigrette salad dressing.  
Recommend low-sodium, low-calorie, low-fat, cholesterol-free, and low-sugar condiment options. |
|---|---|
| Beverages | Require at least 50% of beverages meet the following nutrition standards:  
o Drinking water (including carbonated water products).  
o 100% fruit juice without added sweeteners.  
o 100% vegetable juices labeled as “low sodium.”  
o Milk products, including 1%, non-fat, soy, rice and other non-dairy milk without added sweeteners.  
o Sugar-sweetened or artificially sweetened beverages that do not exceed 25 calories per 8 ounces. |
| Fruits | Require at least three fresh fruit options per meal service, served without added sweeteners.  
Recommend, if canned or frozen fruit is purchased, fruit should be packaged in its own juice or water, with no added sweeteners. |
| Vegetables | Require at least two non-starchy vegetable items per meal service, prepared without fat or oil. For the hot lunch service, at least one vegetable option must be a steamed, baked, or grilled non-starchy vegetable, seasoned, without fat or oil.  
Recommend if canned or frozen vegetables are purchased, select products that are labeled “low sodium” or “no salt added.” |

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8 A condiment is a food, that requires no additional preparation and that is used on a food item, such as relishes, spices, sauces, confections or seasonings.

9 Sugar-sweetened beverages include all sodas, fruit drinks, sport drinks, low-calorie drinks and other beverages that contain added caloric sweeteners, such as sweetened tea, rice drinks, bean beverages, sugar cane beverages and nonalcoholic wines.

10 Starchy vegetables include potatoes (excluding sweet potatoes and yams), corn, and peas.
### Grains
- Require at least 50% of entrées, when applicable, be made with whole grains.  
- Require at least 50% of side items, when applicable, be made with whole grains.

### Protein
- Recommend:
  - Purchase extra lean and/or lean meat.
  - Minimize the purchase of processed meats.

### Dairy
- Recommend:
  - Purchase low-fat or non-fat yogurt and cheese.
  - Purchase cheese labeled “low sodium.”
  - Purchase yogurt with no added caloric sweeteners or yogurts labeled as “reduced sugar” or “less sugar.”

### Other Food Service Requirements
- At least one entrée per meal service (not meeting the Concession Nutrition Standards) shall be offered in a reduced-size portion at a reduced price.
- Recommend at least one vegetarian entrée be offered per meal service.
- Recommend utilizing low fat food preparation methods.
- No menu items shall be deep fried.
- Hydrogenated fats and oils shall not be used in food preparation.
- Operate a self-service salad bar during lunch on all days of operation.
- Bottled water must be available as a beverage option.
- Contractor shall provide access to fresh, cold tap water at no cost.
- The size of all fountain drinks shall not exceed 16 ounces per container.
- Combination meals shall offer, as an alternative, bottled water as a beverage option and fresh fruit or a non-starchy vegetable prepared without fat or oil as a side option.
- Menus should include a variety of culturally diverse foods. Seasonal fruits and vegetables shall be sourced and locally grown foods shall be purchased (when feasible).
- The menu shall also list the nutritional information for each item in accordance with the federal menu-labeling requirements set forth under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010.
- Healthy menu items shall be clearly indicated on all menus. Recommend using symbols added to the menu to identify items that feature local produce or vegetarian menu items (when applicable).
- Develop and implement a gradual sodium reduction plan that meets current Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommendations within 12 months of Agreement commencement in consultation with DPH staff.
- DPH may periodically monitor the Agreement to ensure the Contractors’ compliance with the

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11 Grain-based foods are considered whole grain when the first ingredient listed on the ingredient list is a whole grain. Whole grain ingredients include brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur, millet, oatmeal, quinoa, rolled oats, whole-grain barley, whole-grain corn, whole-grain sorghum, whole-grain triticale, whole oats, whole rye, whole wheat, and wild rice.

12 Extra lean is defined as no more than 5% total fat. Lean is defined as no more than 10% total fat.

13 Reduced-size portions are at least 1/3 smaller than the full-size item and are offered in addition to the full-size versions.

14 Low fat food preparation methods include broiling, grilling, baking, poaching, roasting and steaming.

15 Combination meals consist of an entrée plus a side option and/or beverage.

16 Starchy vegetables include potatoes (excluding sweet potatoes and yams), corn, and peas.

17 Locally grown is defined by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council as within a 200 mile radius of Los Angeles.
Concession Nutrition Standards.
- The prices of healthy entrées, side items, snacks/desserts and beverages shall not exceed the price of other menu options. Pricing for the salad bar and pre-packaged salads shall be competitive with other entrée options.
- Prominently display Choose Health LA signage\(^\text{18}\) that promotes healthy food and beverage options.
  - Signage indicating availability of fresh, cold tap water at no charge shall be placed at fountain drink machine or hydration station.
  - Signage identifying reduced-size portion entrée options and combination meals with the alternative option to select bottled water and a non-starchy vegetable or fruit as a side item shall be displayed.
- Healthy option items should be positioned prominently in the cafeteria and be easily accessible for customers.
  - Only display food and beverage items meeting Concession Nutrition Standards, including healthy snacks and water, within five feet of all checkout registers.
  - Candy bars, cookies, chips and sugar-sweetened beverages\(^\text{19}\) shall be removed from checkout register area or at point-of-purchase.
  - Fresh fruit shall be displayed within reach of the checkout register.
  - Only healthy beverages shall be displayed in eye-level sections of beverage cases.
  - Only healthy snacks/desserts shall be displayed in eye-level sections of display areas.
  - Healthy entrées and side items shall be placed at the front of each food service area.

3) Implement Institutional Policy for System Change
Early in implementation, DPH contacted all County departments that sell, serve or distribute food to develop a list of 1) food service venues, 2) the date(s) of food service contracts up for renewal or new contracts, and 3) overviews of existing and forthcoming food service and vending contracts. During the initial engagement with departments, DPH provided an overview of the program (motion), goals, and background on obesity prevention. Where feasible, DPH conducted an assessment of the current status of each department’s food environments and coordinated a time for future follow-up assessments.

DPH coordinates the following activities:
- **Develop shared vision and draw on existing organizational capacity**
  DPH is working on multiple interventions to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages served or sold on government property including school districts, City/County government facilities/programs and private institutions such as hospitals. DPH’s Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention coordinates among all nutrition program interventions within and external to the Department.

- **Meet with stakeholders affected by institutional policy**
  The policy requires all County departments involved in food and/or beverage procurement, sales, or distribution to meet with DPH personnel to discuss their County department’s food service programs and needs. In this regard, DPH coordinated a comprehensive food service assessment by conducting interviews with 12 County departments. Interviews revealed the following information: types of food venues in the County; contractual information including expiration dates, number of

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\(^{18}\) Signage shall be provided by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.
\(^{19}\) Sugar-sweetened beverages include all sodas, fruit drinks, sport drinks, low-calorie drinks and other beverages that contain added caloric sweeteners, such as sweetened tea, rice drinks, bean beverages, sugar cane beverages and nonalcoholic wines.
vendors; existing nutrition guidelines pertaining to a department's food services; number of meals served/sold; populations served; staff capacity and barriers to improving the nutritional content of meals.

- **Develop work plan**
  Information obtained during the assessment interviews allowed DPH to develop a 5-year implementation work plan. The work plan facilitated DPH appraisal of its workload and the anticipated capacity needed to provide technical assistance and training for departmental staff that handle food service and vending contracts.

- **Provide on-going technical assistance on implementation**
  Since each County department has different food service needs, DPH provides technical assistance and training to County departments on a case-by-case basis. For example, the Department of Public Works administers a food service contract with a vendor to sell food and beverages in a cafeteria and vending machines, while the Department of Parks and Recreation administers food service contracts for both food sold in cafes and vending machines, as well as food and beverages offered through the USDA's Summer Food Service and After-School Snack programs. DPH convenes annual learning forums targeting County departments to share best practices and resources, and provide technical assistance to support implementation and evaluation of adopted nutrition standards. DPH also provides technical assistance about product placement and promotion of healthier food and beverage options to departments having on-site cafes or cafeterias (i.e., placing fruit and water near the cash register and placing water in eye-level section of all beverage cases).

- **Start slow, and then package best practices to speed policy implementation**
  DPH recognized the need to start program implementation slowly, learn from initial successes and challenges, and then incorporate lessons learned into the assistance provided to future adopters. DPH is currently developing implementation guides with resources designed to speed implementation of the food procurement requirements in the remaining County departments.

- **Throughout the process, increase buy-in by involving stakeholders and promoting the initiative**
  Publications in County department newsletters, consumer promotional materials including table-tents promoting water and health tips, presentations in the City of Los Angeles and in other cities/communities across the county, and social media initiatives all serve to involve relevant stakeholders and promote the healthy food procurement initiative. DPH also regularly convenes an advisory committee of organizations that support the implementation and promotion of the initiative.

4) **Evaluate Institutional Policy Implementation, Adherence, and Impact**
In the County of Los Angeles, DPH evaluates institutional policy implementation and provides feedback and technical assistance to the contracted food vendors for quality improvement purposes. For example, DPH prepares quality improvement plans noting where food service vendors are not in compliance with the Food Service Requirements and makes recommendations to vendors so they can make necessary changes.
Keys to Success:
1. Build upon what came before and on lessons from successful nutrition and/or policy, systems, and environmental change interventions.
2. Establish strong consensus among the coordinating organization’s employees about the institutional policy’s mission, key components and activities, and short and long-term outcome goals.
3. Seek buy-in from key decision-makers. Decision-makers at the County-level in Los Angeles County prioritized obesity reduction, creating a window of opportunity for institutional policy change. Additionally, other national food procurement efforts also contributed to a favorable environment for obesity-related, policy change interventions locally.
4. Support from County-level decision-makers gave the coordinating organization authority to monitor and in some instances enforce the institutional policy.
5. Long-term planning and financial support is crucial.
6. The coordinating organization should have the capacity to organize a complex initiative. Hire or identify staff that has demonstrated the ability to work collaboratively with stakeholders, and have an understanding of policy adoption, implementation and evaluation in the institutional setting.
7. Take a step-by-step approach. First, the institutional policy was adopted at the County level. Next, the coordinating organization interviewed representatives from each County department involved in food/beverage procurement, sales, or distribution to better understand their food service needs. Finally, the coordinating organization is working department-by-department to implement venue-specific Food Service Requirements.
8. Strong connections to the CDC, research universities, and other municipal public health departments around the country helped the coordinating organization identify and employ best practices for system-level changes in the organization.

Barriers to Implementation:
1. Complexity of the policy – there was a steep learning curve as the coordinating organization sought to understand how food service contracts work within a large county government.
2. Variation in food service needs and contract timelines makes it challenging for the coordinating organization to support implementation of Food Service Requirements and evaluate adherence.
3. Engaging all the stakeholders, consumers, County department leadership, and food service personnel, is time-consuming and can be resource intensive.
4. Limited nutrition knowledge among County staff with the responsibility to contract with food service providers made implementation a challenge.

EVIDENCE REVIEW SUMMARY

Underlying Theory: The County of Los Angeles’ healthy food procurement initiative is based on the policy and organizational levels of the socio-ecological model. It also uses health marketing strategies of product, place, price and promotion.

Strategies Used:
1. **Changing access and availability to favor healthy foods and beverages**
   This evidence-based strategy supports making it easier to obtain healthier foods and beverages, while also making it harder to obtain less healthy foods and beverages. This
strategy has been recommended in a variety of settings, including the workplace. Specifically, the County’s healthy food procurement initiative was designed to change the food and beverage environment within government facilities to favor healthier choices. The food procurement process was changed so that all foods and beverages had to meet specific nutrition standards that are consistent with the USDA, FDA and other federal/state/local agency recommendations.

2. **Point-of-purchase and point-of-decision labeling to favor healthy food and beverages**

   A promising environmental strategy to promote healthier choices in workplace cafeterias and vending machines is point-of-purchase and point-of-decision labeling to favor healthier foods and beverages. In the County of Los Angeles initiative, several approaches were used. DPH is working with departments to label healthier menu options, place healthier snacks (like fresh fruit) closer to the cash register and move the less healthy snacks (like candy) farther away from the cash register. DPH is also working to promote water by placing water at eye-level in beverage cases and vending machines and requiring calorie labeling to help consumers make informed choices. In addition, general table tents and signs on walls were created to promote healthier choices.

3. **Pricing strategies to favor healthy foods and beverages**

   Pricing strategies that make healthy food less expensive and unhealthy food more expensive can be effective in changing purchasing behaviors. The healthy food procurement initiative in Los Angeles County included multiple pricing incentives for retail food venues, including: (a) the prices of healthy entrées, side items, snacks/desserts and beverages must not exceed the price of the other menu options, and (b) bottled water must be available as a beverage option and the price per ounce cannot be higher than any other beverage option.

**Research Findings or Evaluation Outcomes:**

The County of Los Angeles has 37 departments (12 are involved in food procurement) and over 100,000 employees. The healthy food procurement initiative is a very large undertaking and the creators have outlined short (1-3 year), intermediate (3-5 year) and long-term (6+ year) outcomes. At this time, only the short-term outcomes have been assessed.

The initial assessment involved an extensive survey of the settings (e.g., cafeterias, vending machines, and concessions), practices (current nutrition standards, dietary accommodations), and challenges anticipated by each County department. At the time of the Center TRT review, the first three departments to participate were the Department of Health Services, the Department of Public Works, and the Probation Department. The Department of Public Works had adopted and began implementation of new food service requirements, while the other two departments were in the adoption phase.

During the past year, Public Health has also worked with the Chief Executive Office, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Department of Health Services on a second food service contract. DPH provided technical assistance to all five departments, conducted site visits and menu reviews, recommended nutrition standards to be integrated into their solicitation processes, and established a monitoring and compliance system.

An adapted version of the validated Nutrition Environment Measures Survey (NEMS) tool was used to collect baseline data on the food and beverage options offered in vending machines and cafeterias at selected facility locations. The evaluation was repeated.
approximately six months after food requirements implementation. The data presented to date are preliminary and suggest that there have been some meaningful changes. Specifically, the DPH evaluation team documented that three entrées were labeled as healthy compared to none at baseline. Also compliance with the 12 oz. cup limit for sugary drinks was noted, however, it was unclear that the larger size cups (16 to 24 oz) were only for diet drinks. In addition, improvements in percent of healthy snacks (41 to 80%) and beverages (30 to 79%) were observed in vending machines. Early observations also suggest the department is implementing some of the pricing, placement, and promotion activities recommended in the food service contract.

Although the initiative is still in its very early stages, there are plans to conduct further impact evaluation. DPH plans to continue their technical assistance through the dissemination of healthy food procurement toolkits, promotion of model procurement guidelines for a variety of venues and institutions, and recognition for departments that have made changes. DPH evaluation team has published several articles and is currently working on a number of papers to document the challenges and successes of creating healthier food environments in the County of Los Angeles. Contribution to this evidence base should provide valuable information for informing similar efforts in other sectors (e.g., cities, private companies, community-based organizations with food services).

POTENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

REACH
The healthy food procurement institutional policy has high potential for reach as it intends to increase access to healthy foods and beverages in various food venues that serve County employees and visitors, many of whom are minorities, populations at risk for obesity and poverty, and immigrants. The reach is amplified if the populations to whom the County distributes food to, such as youth, senior citizens and inmates, are also considered.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated No. of Meals Served in Various Settings/Programs in Los Angeles County</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settings/Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worksite cafeterias</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile trucks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snack shops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jails</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juvenile Hall/Probation camps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
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EFFECTIVENESS
The potential for effectiveness is also high as the institutional policy uses multiple evidence-based approaches, therefore, is likely to lead to improvements in the food choices of employees and users of the County’s facilities. However, as of this review, evidence for effectiveness is currently limited to only one of their 12 County departments, which is the County Department of Public Works. Current evaluation findings show that improvements have been made in the availability of healthy snacks and beverage options in their vending machines and in the number of healthier entrées options in their cafeteria.
**ADOPTION**

As of the Center TRT review, five out of the 12 County departments have adopted healthy procurement policies and/or practices through specific contractual requirements, including the Department of Public Works, Department of Health Services, the Probation Department, the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Chief Executive Office. Three of the five departments’ food venues include cafeterias and vending machines. The Probation Department includes food services at juvenile halls and camps and the Department of Parks and Recreation administers distributive meal programs in the summer and after-school.

Because the institutional policy is relatively new, the current adoption rate is unlikely to reflect the final rate, particularly as the requirements in the Board motion is an institutional request to follow new food procurement procedures. Furthermore, support through training, technical assistance and monitoring should further increase adoption in the remaining departments. If demonstrated to be feasible and effective, other government and private workplaces with similar infrastructures around the country could adopt similar strategies in healthy food procurement policies.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

As of the Center TRT review, one out of the 12 County departments (Department of Public Works) had begun implementation of the institutional policy, which includes integrating healthy food procurement standards in their contract, hiring a new food vendor and increasing access to healthier food choices in their cafeteria and vending machines.

Similar to Adoption, the potential for implementation is relatively high as this is an institutional requirement and funding is available to support on-going technical assistance and monitoring. However, the differences in food venues and diverse populations across the County departments highlight ongoing challenges with the implementation process.

**MAINTENANCE**

The healthy food procurement initiative in the County of Los Angeles is complex and comprehensive so maintenance is a major consideration, particularly if and when funding for technical assistance and monitoring decreases or ends. However, this may be less of a concern, as this institutional policy becomes more common and relations with new food vendors become more established. Maintaining the changes should become easier as healthier food choices become new social norms for cafeterias, vending machines and other food venues in the County of Los Angeles and elsewhere in California and in the U.S.

**INTERVENTION MATERIALS**

The following items can be found on the Center TRT Website:

- Model policy – *Healthy Food Promotion in LA County Food Service Contracts*
- “Creating Healthy Food Environments” policy brief
- Model memo from the Department of Public Health’s Health Officer to all the County Departments informing them of the Board of Supervisors’ motion and its implications
- Sample Food Service Requirements for Concession Operations at a County of Los Angeles Cafeteria, 2011
- Nutrition Standards Implementation Guides (available for vending machine drinks and snacks)
EVALUATION MATERIALS

Center TRT developed an evaluation logic model and evaluation plan, which can be found on the website, for a policy modeled after the Healthy Food Promotion in Los Angeles County Food Service Contracts institutional policy. The policy aims to increase access and availability of healthy foods and beverages in county departments and programs by including nutrition standards and healthy food promotion practices into food service contract requests for proposals. The logic model is intended to guide the evaluation process (as opposed to the planning process); the evaluation plan focuses on the implementation and effectiveness of an approach similar to LA County’s. The evaluation plan addresses the reach, adoption, extent of implementation, and effectiveness of a policy modeled after the LA County policy. The evaluation is a pre-post design with no comparison group. This evaluation plan provides guidance on evaluation questions and types and sources of data for both process and outcome evaluation. If you are interested in answering evaluation questions not listed in the evaluation plan, please refer to the list of additional evaluation questions here. We suggest a variety of data collection tools throughout the evaluation plan.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Please contact Michelle Wood for technical assistance. Contact information is available under Additional Information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Web links: www.choosehealthla.com

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Related Resources:
- 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
  www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  www.cdc.gov/salt/pdfs/dhdsp_procurement_guide.pdf
- Change Lab Solutions: Understanding Healthy Procurement: Using Government’s Purchasing Power to Increase Access to Healthy Food
  http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/healthy-procurement
Publications: