

How to Choose Nutrition Standards for Your State/Locality

Every state and locality is unique—different populations, demographics, concerns, and political climates. When trying to determine the right nutrition standards for your state/locality, here are a few things to consider:

1. How to secure nutrition standards?

Nutrition standards can be adopted using a variety of approaches: passing a bill in the state legislature or city/town/county council; an executive order from the governor or mayor; or regulations from the department of health.

2. Which venues to include?

Applying nutrition standards to improve the foods served and sold on government property helps ensure governments “walk-the-walk.” A lack of healthy options on state and local property undermines and contradicts state/local obesity and chronic disease prevention programs and policies.

States and localities might phase in their policy by first covering select parts of government property and institutions:

- **Agency Buildings**
 - Availability of healthy options supports workers’ health and provides visitors access to healthy foods and beverages while visiting public agencies
 - Create an environment that supports and models healthy eating to reduce health care costs and absenteeism caused by obesity and chronic diseases
- **Parks, Community Centers, Recreational Facilities, and Rest Stops**
 - Ensure there are healthier items available so that parents can provide their children with healthful options
 - Expose a diverse audience to healthier foods and beverages
 - Provide healthier options when citizens travel or spend time in the community
- **Public Hospitals**
 - Hospitals are health institutions and should support and model healthy behaviors
 - Sends the message that a healthy diet is important and necessary for overall health

- Gives patients a chance to start complying with healthier diets while still in a health care setting
- **Public Universities and Colleges**
 - Provides dormitory students who receive all of their food from campus dining services with healthy, balanced meals, helping them avoid the “freshman fifteen”
Gives students, faculty, and employees healthy options while eating on campus
- **Correctional Facilities, Youth Detention Centers, and Group Homes**
 - Give people served in these venues the ability to receive all daily requirements of fruits, vegetables, and other healthful foods (because they receive all their meals in this setting, if the institution is not providing balanced meals, people have no ability to meet their daily requirements)
 - If the meals contain too much salt, sugar, saturated fat, or calories, people will over-consume those nutrients, increasing their risk of obesity and chronic diseases, adding to health care costs
- **Childcare Facilities**
 - Fifty-five percent of children ages 3-6, not yet in kindergarten, are in childcare centers
 - Politically easier to start with places with a high percentage of children
 - Key next step after improving foods available in schools
- **Homeless Shelters and Senior Centers**
 - Though people in these facilities may not consume all of their meals in this setting, these facilities make a significant contribution to their diets
 - If the meals do not include the proper proportion of the foods and nutrients people need, it will be hard to make up for that imbalance in other meals throughout the day

3. Which nutrients should be included?

- Standards should address key nutrients that are associated with increased risk chronic diseases and calories to address obesity. If key nutrients are not included, the policy will not fully address obesity and chronic diseases. Nutrients to address should include:
 - Calories
 - Saturated Fat
 - Trans Fat
 - Sodium
 - Added Sugars

- It also is important to address positive nutritional value, making sure the food/meal provides fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and key nutrients of public health concern.
 - Example: Consider both positive and negative contributions of nutrients, ingredients, and foods to the diets of adults and children (including calories and/or portion size, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, added sugars, and the presence of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nutrients of concern in Americans' diets).
- Nutrition science advances over time. Therefore, your nutrition standards will need to be updated periodically. Write into your policy that the standards be reviewed and updated from time to time. For example, require that the policy be reviewed after each update of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). Tying the policy to the DGA will ensure the policy reflects current nutrition science, key nutritional concerns, and eating behaviors.
 - Example: The nutrition standards must be reviewed and updated within six months of each update of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

For model vending standards please visit: <http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/final-model-vending-standards.pdf>

4. What percent of options should meet nutrition standards?

- Different states and localities have different political climates. You should adopt the highest percent of healthy items that is feasible for your jurisdiction.
- One hundred percent healthy is best, but if a high percentage of healthier options does not seem feasible at first, a phased-in approach over a number of years might be the most reasonable approach.
- If the policy has less than 100% healthier food and beverage options, build pricing, placement, promotion, and education techniques into the policy to help increase the sales of healthier options. All policies should include those promotional techniques, but they are particularly important for policies with less than 100% healthier items.
 - Check out ChangeLab Solutions website for model language for your vending contract: <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/healthier-vending-municipalities>.

For a model bill, please visit: <http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/model-procurement-bill.pdf>

For more information, contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at 202-777-8352 or nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org