More and more Kansas hospitals are participating in Healthy Kansas Hospitals, a collaborative approach to improving the food and beverage choices found in hospitals across the state. This initiative is gaining momentum because supporting health-promoting behaviors and choices is inherently consistent with hospitals’ mission to prevent and treat chronic disease. Hospitals are powerful role models in the communities they serve. By modifying food vending and procurement policies, Kansas hospitals can help improve overall patient health as well as provide staff members and visitors with easier access to healthy foods and beverages.

Vending machines, snack bars and cafeterias often sell foods and beverages that are high in calories, added sugars and salt while delivering little nutritional value. Using evidence-based nutrition standards, hospitals can revise their existing food vending and/or procurement policies which can be incorporated in food vendor bids and contracts. Well-drafted food vending and/or procurement policies usually include the following components, which are addressed individually below:

• Statement of purpose;
• Scope of the policy;
• Evidence-based nutrition standards;
• Provisions addressing the “4Ps” of marketing: product, pricing, placement and promotion;
• Implementation provisions;
• Enforcement provisions; and
• Evaluation provisions.

Statement of Purpose
Setting out clear goals for the policy identifies what the hospital intends to achieve. Understanding of the purpose is critical to applying the policy to actions and decision-making.

The written policy facilitates its consistent implementation, and can be used to raise awareness and educate all stakeholders. Written policies provide consistency as changes in organizational leadership or priorities occur.

The Healthy Kansas Hospital initiative has created a Model Policy Template that can be found in this toolkit or online at HealthyKansasHospitals.org.

Scope
The policy should specify exactly what is covered. Does the policy apply only to venues open to the “public,” such as the cafeteria, snack bar and vending machines? Are catered events included? Does the policy apply to functions for specific groups, such as the medical staff or governing board? Does the policy apply to off-campus hospital-sponsored events?

Ideally, the policy should cover all the ways that food and beverages are purchased, sold or provided by the hospital or within its property, as well as at sponsored events or meetings whether they are on-site or off-site. Any exceptions should be as narrow as possible and carefully thought out so that the exceptions do not undermine the policy’s credibility and effectiveness.

TIP:
Incorporate the policy into requests for bids and vendor contracts. Terms of contracts are legally binding on the hospital and its vendors, so be sure that the hospital’s food and beverage policies are reflected in all vendor contracts.

Evidence-based Nutrition Standards
A number of organizations as well as the federal government have developed evidence-based nutrition standards. More than 20 federal departments have implemented the Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations, developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the General Services Administration. In 2014, Healthy Kansas Hospitals published Sample Policies and Standards which provides examples of evidenced-based nutrition standards for foods and beverages, including recommendations from the American Heart Association and the Partnership for a Healthier America.
Ideally, the same or similar standards should be applied across all outlets, including cafeterias, catered meetings and vending machines, but sometimes nutrition standards must be tailored to fit a specific situation. For example, it may be easier to offer low-sodium dishes in the cafeteria than to find a wide selection of low-sodium packaged foods for vending machines.

While good nutrition standards are based on scientific evidence, they also must be attainable. Some things to consider in establishing your hospital’s nutrition standards include:

- What products are available? How many meet the nutrition standards you are considering?
- Do current vendors use some form of nutrition standards?
- Will all food and beverage options be required to meet the nutrition standards? Perhaps you will consider setting a percentage, such as 75 percent or 50 percent. The percentage might vary depending on the type of outlet or product.
- What process will be used to update nutrition standards over time?
- How will you ensure that standards are being followed?

**Addressing the 4Ps of Marketing**

Regardless of their nutritional status, foods and beverages are marketed based on the product, its price, its placement and promotion. Applying the four Ps of marketing is even more important to encourage individuals to purchase healthier foods and beverages that offer nutritional value. In 2014, Healthy Kansas Hospitals published Five Steps to Food and Beverage Success which provides ideas on improving food and beverage operations as well as some tips on ways to maximize efficiencies. In addition, consider the following:

**Implementation**

The hospital’s vending and/or procurement policy should state how implementation will occur, including dates and responsible individual. Existing food and beverage contracts may dictate the timeframe for implementing a new policy, depending on when contracts expire and if changes in product specifications are allowed. Some vendors may be willing to phase-in healthier options under existing contracts. When the hospital solicits bids from vendors, be sure that the request for proposals incorporates the new policy. Additionally, be sure that all new contracts include the provisions stated in the policy, and amend existing contracts as feasible. While the hospital may have a policy for certain nutritional standards, vendors are bound only by what is stated in the contract.

**TIP:**  
Be sure to factor in adequate time for vendors to transition their products and make customers aware of changes. Use pricing, product placement and promotional materials to enhance healthier products.

**Enforcement**

The hospital’s food and beverage policies should explain how they are to be enforced, including identification of the specific department or position responsible for enforcement. Ways to verify compliance with the policies likely will include record-keeping as well as reporting requirements for vendors. To ensure vendor cooperation and compliance, it is prudent to incorporate enforcement provisions/requirements into contracts and to address potential compliance problems, including the consequences for non-compliance.

### THE 4PS: PRODUCT, PRICING, PLACEMENT AND PROMOTION

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<th>Concept</th>
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| **Product** | - Provide a range of product offerings that meet the nutrition standards so that customers have several products to choose from  
- Reduce access to products that don’t meet the standards by reducing or eliminating their availability  
- Offer healthier portion sizes  
- Increase access to drinking water |
| **Pricing** | - Ensure that the products that meet the nutrition standards are affordable  
- Increase the prices for products that don’t meet the standards, and/or lower prices of products that do meet the standards  
- Offer discounts and promotions on products that meet the nutrition standards |
| **Placement** | - Put the products that meet the nutrition standards in places that are easy to see and easy to grab — such as checkout lanes, at eye level on shelves and in vending machines, in slots by the selection buttons in machines  
- Re-arrange beverage cooler plan-a-grams to give favorable placement to beverages that meet the nutrition standards |
| **Promotion** | - Use signs, shelf tags and other educational materials to draw attention to the products that meet the nutritional standards  
- Provide free taste tests and sampling opportunities to build customer awareness and appreciation for new products that meet the nutritional standards  
- Ask or require vendors through their contracts to remove advertisements for products that don’t meet the standards, including on vending machine facades, or only allow advertisements for products that meet the standards |
**Evaluation**

Having baseline data against which to measure the success of implementing healthier vending and/or procurement policies is critical. An assessment of the current food and beverage environment in the hospital before policy changes are made is a good starting point. Assessments may collect information on the following:

- Choices being offered in different types of food outlets and their pricing;
- Distribution of food and beverages as well as other options;
- Requirements of existing contracts, their expiration or renewal dates and any options for product additions/changes; and
- Preferences and perceptions of employees, visitors, staff and patients regarding existing and/or potential product choices and their receptivity to healthier options.

Information gained through an assessment may be helpful in educational messages about why policies are being changed. For example, find out how many pounds of sugar are contained in sugary beverages sold to employees and visitors. A message, such as “Did you know that ABC Hospital sold more than 20,000 pounds of sugar in its beverage vending machines last year” could help persuade individuals to make healthier beverage choices.

Among the ways to evaluate success of vending and/or procurement policies are the following:

- Are vendors supplying the food and beverage products per their contracts?
- Is the hospital following its policy in its food and beverage purchasing decisions?
- How have purchasing patterns changed across or between the various food and beverage outlets?
- Do staff and community members show increased understanding of healthier food and beverage choices?
- Do staff and community members know whom to go to with questions about the policy?
- Have attitudes about healthier food and beverage choices changed?

Evaluation will demonstrate if policy goals are being achieved and behavior changes are occurring. For example, reports on vending sales may document changes in behavior to choose more healthy foods and beverages. Progress reports should be shared with upper management, and the hospital should inform patients, visitors, staff, employees and the community about successes.

**Education Key to Changing Behaviors**

Kansas hospitals are taking a leadership role in promoting healthier food and beverage options in their facilities. Adopting, implementing and enforcing healthier food and beverage policies demonstrate the hospital’s commitment to improving community health. Making these changes provides an opportunity to reinforce the strong relationship between diet and health, and between obesity and many chronic diseases.

Educating stakeholders as well as the general public about how the hospital’s food and beverage environment is changing and why must be done before and during implementation. Educational messages should help employees, staff, visitors, patients and others understand that the policy is designed to promote choice by ensuring that more healthy options are accessible. Use a variety of communications tools, such as posters, flyers, table tents, newsletter articles, blogs, emails, Facebook and other social media postings. Events – such as taste tests or cooking demonstrations – can promote stakeholder buy-in and support.

Educational efforts should not cease once the new policies are implemented. A regular, sustained communications campaign reinforces messages to make healthier food and beverage choices to fight obesity and many related chronic diseases. Healthy food and beverage choices are keys to life-long good health.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest has created a survey tool to assess employee attitudes and perceptions that includes both pre- and post-implementation questions; access the survey tool at [http://cspinet.org/images/htcpp-survey.pdf](http://cspinet.org/images/htcpp-survey.pdf).

Emory University has developed a series of nutrition environment assessment surveys, many of which are available on the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey-Vending Tools webpage at [http://www.nems-v.com/NEMS-VTools.html](http://www.nems-v.com/NEMS-VTools.html).

The Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation of the Kansas Hospital Association has created a series of resources designed to inform and support efforts to promote healthy food and beverage environments in Kansas hospitals. The Public Health Law Center assisted in creating this document. These resources are funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. For more information, visit the Healthy Kansas Hospitals website at [www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org](http://www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org).