Connecting Public Health and the Food Industry: Reducing Sodium in Partnership with Food Service Vendors

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Presentation Overview

Provide background on LA County’s Sodium Reduction Initiative (LACSRI).

Describe LACSRI’s current partnerships with food vendors and strategies to reduce sodium in food offered in public and private institutions.

Discuss recommendations to scale healthy food procurement efforts and engage food industry partners in Los Angeles County.
Healthy Food Procurement (HFP) Initiative

2010 – DPH launched its initiative to create healthier food environments in the County of LA with support from the CDC.

• Communities Putting Prevention to Work
• Sodium Reduction in Communities Program

2011 – County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors adopted Board motion, Healthy Food Promotion in LA County Food Services Contracts.

2011-2016 – DPH has partnered with 7 County Departments to operationalize nutrition standards (e.g., sodium limits).
Los Angeles County Sodium Reduction Initiative

• Supported by CDC’s Sodium Reduction in Communities Program (SRCP)
  – 2010-13: County of Los Angeles government, school districts, media, and menu labeling
  – 2013-16: County of Los Angeles government, City of Los Angeles government, vending and hospitals

• Goal: to reduce population sodium intake in Los Angeles County

• Implementing strategies to improve food service venues
  – Menu labeling, sodium limits, smaller portions, placement, pricing strategies

• National partners: NSRI and Million Hearts

SALT is hidden in many places you may not suspect.

Too much salt can raise blood pressure and lead to heart attack and stroke.
Food Service Contracting Process

Approach to Integrating Sodium Standards in Food Service Contracts

Phase 1
Department Develops Request for Proposal (RFP)

Phase 2
Department Releases RFP and Vendors Respond

Phase 3
Proposal Evaluation and Criteria

Phase 4
Food Service Vendor Selected

DPH Recommended Sodium Standards Integrated into RFP
Summary of Sodium Reduction Strategies in Contracts

Food Sold on Government Property

Sodium Standards

**Sodium Reduction Plan**
- Require all individual food items contain ≤480 mg per serving, with the exception of the food categories below.
- Recommend purchasing “low sodium” (≤140 mg sodium per serving) whenever feasible.

Sodium Standards for Purchased Foods
- Meat and Fish
- Grains
- Vegetables
- Condiments and Sauces
- Dairy

Sodium Limits

**Entrées** (50% of Entrées; ≤ 600 mg)
**Side Items** (50% of Sides; ≤ 360 mg)
**Snacks/Desserts** (50% of Snacks/Desserts; ≤ 360 mg)**

**Low Sodium Condiments**

**Beverages** (Vegetable juices labeled as "low-sodium")

**Vegetables** (Canned/Frozen "low-sodium"/"no salt added")

**Dairy** (Recommend purchasing cheese labeled "low sodium")

**Menu Labeling** (including sodium content)

- Only 2 entrées required to meet the standard
- ** 100% of products in Vending machines are ≤ 360 mg of sodium

5 Departments (16 Venues)
- Department of Health Services
- Department of Public Works*
- Department of Beaches & Harbors*
- Chief Executive Office (Cafeteria)
- Chief Executive Office (Vending)
Worksite Vending Machines in the County of Los Angeles

ALL SNACKS SOLD IN COUNTY-CONTRACTED VENDING MACHINES MUST ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING NUTRITION GUIDELINES:

AN INDIVIDUALLY SOLD SNACK THAT HAS NO MORE THAN:

1. 35% of its calories from fat (excluding legumes, nuts, nut butters, seeds, eggs, non-fried vegetables and cheese packaged for individual sale).
2. 10% of its calories from saturated fat (excluding eggs and cheese packaged for individual sale).
3. 35% sugar by weight (excluding fruits and vegetables).
4. 250 calories per individual food item or package if a pre-packaged item.
5. 360 milligrams of sodium per individual food item or package if a pre-packaged item.

EXAMPLES OF SNACKS THAT COMPLY WITH THE NUTRITION POLICY:

- Baked chips
- Unsalted nuts
- Pretzels
- Granola and Energy bars
- Dried fruit (no sugar added)
Canteen Refreshment Services
A member of Compass Group USA

Canteen’s Choice Plus Program

Snack Criteria:
• 250 calories or less
• 10 g* of fat or less
• 3 g of saturated fat or less
• 0 g of trans fat
• 230 mg of sodium or less
• 20 g** of sugar or less.

*Nuts and seeds are exempt from the total fat limit, but must meet all other nutrient criteria.
**Unsweetened dried fruit is exempt from the total sugar limit, but must meet all other nutrient criteria.
Choice Plus vending snack options include granola and/or fruit bars, dried fruit mixes, trail mixes, low-fat and/or baked chips and crackers, and more
# Partnering with Your Food Service Vendor

## Vending Machine Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Revise Procurement Policy</strong></th>
<th>• Select vendor with strongest capacity to implement nutrition guidelines including sodium.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop Implementation Plan/Toolkit</strong></td>
<td>• Meet to specify what foods are allowed, the institutions impacted, and the timeline for implementation.</td>
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</table>
| **Evaluation Plan** | • Partner on evaluation and monitoring including collecting data (e.g., nutritional analysis, sales)  
  • Assess patron receptivity and share with vendor. |
| **Promotional Signage** | • Work with vendor to implement promotional signage that advertises products that meet guidelines. |
Assessment of Sodium Content in Vending Machine Products Offered

300+ machines across 150+ locations
46,471 employees; 15,840 visitors per day across all locations

<table>
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<th>Adherence to Policy</th>
<th>Average Sodium per packaged product</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline (old vendor)</td>
<td>Follow-up (new vendor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snacks</strong></td>
<td>27% healthy snacks</td>
<td>70% healthy snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beverages</strong></td>
<td>57% healthy beverages</td>
<td>82% healthy beverages</td>
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*Average 30% reduction of sodium in snacks*
Healthy Hospital Food Initiative

2013 – With funding from the CDC’s *Sodium Reduction in Communities Program*, DPH launched its initiative to create healthier food environments in public and private hospitals.

**Hospitals and Clinics**

City of Hope National Medical Center
Harbor-UCLA Medical Center
LAC +USC Medical Center
Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Rancho Los Amigos Rehabilitation Center
White Memorial Medical Center
High Desert Regional Health Center
County Hospital Food Service Contract

- Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, LAC +USC Medical Center, Olive View-UCLA Medical Center, Rancho Los Amigos Rehabilitation Center

- Sodium standards for concession operations in Department of Health Services food service request for proposal (RFP)*
  - Side Items: ≥230 mg
  - Entrees: ≥600 mg
  - Snacks/Desserts: ≥230 mg
  - Low sodium condiments
  - Sodium Reduction Plan
  - Healthier Checkout, Labeling & Placement Strategies

- Partnership for a Healthier America’s Hospital Healthy Food Initiative.

*Final food service contract is pending. Current vendor is Morrison Healthcare for 3 hospitals. Sodexo is the current contractor for Rancho Los Amigos Rehabilitation Center.
LAC + USC Medical Center

Cafeteria Committee Launched
- Hospital administrators, employees, Morrison Healthcare, DPH, etc.
- Morrison Taste Testing – Lower Sodium Products

Implementing a Multifaceted Approach
- Changes to the food environment
- Promotion and placement strategies

Partnering with Public Health
- Sodium reduction trainings
- Environmental scans, patron survey
- Partnering on evaluation and monitoring including collecting key data (e.g., nutritional analysis, sales)

Partnering with Public Health
Assessment of Sodium Content in Snack Products Offered in 4 County Public Hospitals

- DPH conducted environmental scans of hospital concession operations
  - (NEMS-V) tool for vending machines
  - Environmental scan tool for cafeterias (*internally developed*)

- Packaged Snacks Sold in Cafeterias*
  - **Average sodium** (per package) across all four hospitals: **235 milligrams**
  - **Average calories** (per package): across all four hospitals: **250 calories**

* Baseline Preliminary Results
Public Health’s Partnership with Food Service Vendors

Define “healthy” and establish nutrition goals and healthy food service guidelines based on the latest nutrition science.

Leverage other local and national initiatives (NSRI, PHA, etc.).

Communicate the economic, social, environmental and health benefits to management and employees of the HFP program.

Provide opportunities for trainings to disseminate HFP and sodium reduction requirements and best practices.

Establish systems to assess adherence to sodium reduction goals and evaluate healthier food improvements over time.
Scaling Healthy Food Procurement in Los Angeles: Identifying Best Practices to Improve the Food Environment

- Facilitators and barriers to scaling HFP practices and policies;

- Actionable steps to improve the reach and impact of HFP efforts in public and private settings;

- Best practices for engaging food industry partners along the institutional supply chain in promoting HFP.
Literature Review and Stakeholder Interview Methods

**Literature Review**: Online scan and literature review of reports, websites, peer-reviewed literature and other relevant sources (95 citations).

**Stakeholder Interviews**: 30 key stakeholder interviews with health departments, funders, local government agencies, the food industry, non-profit organizations, etc.

**Healthy Food Procurement Work Group**: Representatives from the food industry, local government agencies, local health departments, federal agencies and non-profit organizations.
## Literature Review Key Findings

### 1. Strategies for Engaging Food Industry Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Examples and Description</th>
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| Engage in collective/coordinated action                                 | • National Salt Reduction Initiative  
• Partnership for a Healthier America                                                                                 |
| Promote consistent messages and contracting language                    | • Uniform standards, boilerplate contract language                                                               |
| Promote food service and other vendors’ development and implementation of internal health and sustainability guidelines | • Compass Group’s “FIT Criteria”  
• Aramark’s “Healthy for Life” program  
• Sodexo’s “LiveWell” campaign                                                                                       |
| Focus on key ingredients or “capstone” foods                           | • Improving the nutritional quality of products that are common ingredients in many recipes.                      |
| Promote gradual implementation                                           | • New products and new product formulations should be implemented gradually.                                       |
| Draw links to the corporate social responsibility (CSR) movement         | • Healthy food procurement practices can form an important component of supply chain CSR practices.                |
Literature Review Key Findings

2. Making the Business Case to Food Industry Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Examples an Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respond to changing customer preferences</td>
<td>• Customers are increasingly concerned with health and wellness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be ahead of the curve</td>
<td>• Sixty-nine states and localities already have policies to improve the nutritional quality of foods on some or all of their property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of healthy options is growing</td>
<td>• Healthy product lists have been published by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Alliance for a Healthier Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving healthy options is good for business</td>
<td>• Providing healthy meal, snack and beverage options can have no effect on revenue (revenue remains stable) or can increase revenue regardless of the sector.</td>
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## Stakeholder Interview Key Findings

### Engaging Food Industry Partners

- Consult food industry partners as “expert advisors” and invite them to provide feedback at every step during implementation.
- Approach food industry partners with coordinated, consistent messaging.

### Making the Business Case

- Demonstrate increasing consumer demand for healthy products.
- Discuss financial impacts of HFP efforts with food industry partners.

### Apply Leverage at Different Points Along the Institutional Food Supply Chain

- Target food distributors and food service operators who are particularly well situated to make improvements in the food system.
- Coordinate local efforts with state and national initiatives for HFP.
Model of Change for Scaling HFP Efforts

**Figure 2: Model of Change for Scaling Up HFP Efforts in Los Angeles**

- **LADPH INPUTS**
  - Convener
  - TA Provider
  - Evaluator

- **Partner Inputs**
  - Public/Private Institutions
    - Advisors on HFP Design
    - HFP Implementing Partners

- **PRODUCTS**
  - HFP at Public/Private Institutions
  - HFP Readiness Assessments
  - HFP Best Practices
  - HFP Implementation / Assessment Toolkits
  - Annual HFP Trainings
  - Lists of Healthy Products
  - Demonstrated Demand for HFP
  - Improved Communications between Public Health and Food Industry
  - Business Case for HFP: Health / Financial Impacts

- **OUTCOMES**
  - Consistent Demand for Healthy Products
  - HFP Self Assessment & Evaluation
  - Number of “Healthy Vendors”
  - Availability of Healthy Products
  - Awareness of Market Size for HFP
  - HFP Buy-in from Food Industry
  - Awareness of Health / Financial Impacts of HFP

Long term Relationships
Recommendations to Public Health

Engaging the Food Industry

1. Lead Healthy Food Procurement Efforts Across Los Angeles
   • Establish consistent sodium reduction goals and requirements for public and private institutions.
   • Improve current system in LA County by implementing innovations such as prequalifying vendors.

2. Convene and Broker Relationships Between Public/Private Institutions and Food Industry Partners
   • Communicate the sodium reduction goals, as well as the role of public health, in language that resonates with food industry partners.
   • Maintain ongoing relationships with food industry partners that inform the work of Public Health.
Recommendations to Public Health

Engaging the Food Industry

3. Provide Technical Assistance to Food Industry Partners

- Provide annual trainings regarding sodium requirements & best practices.
- Explore feasibility of creating and disseminating food product lists that meet sodium requirements.

4. Evaluate HFP Efforts and Disseminate the Business Case

- Research the value of the market (“monetize the demand”) for HFP in a variety of public and private institutions in different sectors.
- Develop and disseminate the “business case” for sodium reduction.
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Resources & Contact Information

Food Procurement resources
http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/chronic
Public education resources
www.choosehealthla.com
Salt shocker videos
http://www.youtube.com/user/ChooseHealthLA
SCRP Case Stories
http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/sodium_reduction.htm

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