

Nutrition & Physical Activity Policy Implementation Resource

Making Healthy Options Available for All

Why Do We Need a Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy?

We all want to be healthy, and the goal of this policy is to make it easier for Alameda County employees and residents to make healthy choices during our busy days. Poor diet and physical inactivity are major contributing factors in chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes – all of which are among the top 10 killers in Alameda County. To reduce rates of obesity and diet related chronic diseases, the food and physical activity environment must be improved. Alameda County is taking a leading role in modeling healthful environments by improving access to healthy food choices and by encouraging healthful behaviors where employees and residents live, play, and work.

When Was the Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy & Guidelines Passed?

On October 16, 2009, the County Board of Supervisors adopted the “Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy & Guidelines,” which revise County practices and policies to promote healthy options for employees, visitors to County buildings, and participants in County meetings and events. The Policy contains specific requirements for County action and became effective January 16, 2010. The Guidelines includes tips for employees on personal choices they can make at work that are part of a healthy lifestyle.

What Does the Policy Mean to County Employees?

The Policy requires that a healthful choice of refreshments be offered at all County-sponsored functions at which meals or snacks are served. You will have more healthy options, such as seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. You'll also see more reusable dishware and utensils. You'll have healthful choices available in vending machines at County-owned and County-leased facilities. You'll also notice more opportunities and incentives to stay physically active and participate in wellness activities during lunch and at breaks, as well as more opportunities to incorporate physical activity into your commute and on-the-job travel.

What Does the Policy Mean to County Residents?

Residents attending County-sponsored meetings and events will have healthy refreshment options. Residents will also benefit from the physical activity breaks during County meetings longer than two hours and the ability to incorporate physical activity when traveling to County facilities and events (e.g., more bike racks, more events near BART/bus). The general public will also benefit by having healthy options in vending machines located in County-owned and County-leased facilities.

What Are My Responsibilities as a County Employee in Implementing This Policy?

All of us have a role in promoting a culture of wellness in our own departments and in the community. Department directors and managers will need to follow the guidelines when ordering foods for meetings and events. They can support their staff by being flexible with schedules to allow employees to exercise at lunch and by encouraging employees to participate in wellness events. Staff can be supportive of each other by forming walking or other activity groups, participating together in sponsored events, and encouraging one another to make healthful food choices.

What Are the Key Sections of the Policy?

- **Wellness:** The County will strive to provide a work environment that fosters good health and wellness by encouraging employee participation in County-sponsored wellness activities and providing support and incentives when feasible.
- **Nutrition:** Food and beverages purchased with County funds for meetings and events will provide variety, nutritional benefit, and choice; at least half of items will meet guidelines to reduce sugar, fats, and trans fats and to increase fiber. Nutrition Services will provide healthy option menu suggestions for ordering from SLEB vendors.
- **Vending Machines:** At least half of food items and beverages available in vending machines on County-leased or County-owned property must meet the "Healthy Option Criteria." Nutrition Services will work with vendors to ensure healthy options are available and clearly marked.
- **Physical Activity:** The County will support employees in staying physically active by promoting 10-minute physical activity breaks at meetings longer than two hours and expanding opportunities for walking, biking, or using transit to get to work and for work-related business. Risk Management is developing a process for employees to reserve facilities for physical activity during non-work time.
- **Waste Reduction and Sustainability:** Policy implementation, such as when food and beverages bought with County funds are served, will align with the goals of the County's 75% Waste Reduction Resolution and Strategic Vision's Environment/Sustainability element. GSA will provide tips and guidelines.

Where Do I Find Out More?

The Wellness Working Group, in coordination with the Labor Management Health Care Committee, will oversee the implementation of the policy. The Public Health Department, Risk Management, and General Services Agency will provide technical assistance for staff who order and purchase food, caterers, vending machine operators, and staff who wish to organize on-site physical activity. Resources are being developed to support implementation. The complete policy and guidelines are posted at: acgov.org/wellness.htm. Questions can be directed to section representatives:

Wellness and Physical Activity:

Employee Health & Wellness
CAO Risk Management
(510) 272-6920

Meals, Snacks, and Vending:

Annette Laverty
Nutrition Services
Public Health Department
(510) 268-4220

Waste Reduction and Sustainability:

Emily Sadigh
Sustainability Program
General Services Agency
(510) 208-9531