

Healthier Food Options for Public Places: Comprehensive Food Service Guidelines Q&A

What are food service guidelines (FSG)?

As part of the overall transformation of the food system to support a culture of health, large institutions and state and local governments are increasingly adopting guidelines for the foods and beverages they purchase, serve and sell on their property and through their programs—from government buildings and parks and recreation centers to hospitals, prisons and senior meal programs. For background information, see [Healthier Food Options for Public Places: Frequently Asked Questions](#).

What are *comprehensive* food service guidelines?

While dozens of local and state governments have adopted guidelines for the food available on public property and through public programs, few of those policies cover the majority of public settings with strong nutrition standards. A comprehensive policy would adopt and implement FSG in the majority or all of the settings, venues and programs within the jurisdiction of the adopting government. Ideally, FSG apply to all food offered, provided or sold on public property, purchased using public funds, and served through public programs. Strong policies ensure that the greatest feasible proportion of offerings in each venue meets evidence-based criteria for healthful foods and beverages.

My locality/state has already adopted guidelines for vending machines and/or meetings and events. Why do we need guidelines for other venues?

Government agencies purchase, sell and serve food through many settings, venues and programs in addition to vending machines, meetings and events. Other venues include cafeterias/cafes, concessions/snack bars, snack kiosks and meals served through institutions, residential facilities or federal, state or local programs. Settings include worksites, hospitals, health systems, corrections and juvenile justice facilities, parks, recreation centers, schools, colleges/universities, early child care and education programs, group homes, shelters, airports, and entertainment venues.

Meals provided through public institutions and nutrition assistance programs often reach families with low-incomes and communities of color, which are more likely to experience disparities in health and access to healthy food. Comprehensive FSG can foster equitable access to healthy food among government employees, recipients of government services and the general public. Furthermore, this approach harnesses more public food purchasing power to improve community food environments relative to policies that are limited to one or two venues.

Where have comprehensive policies been adopted?

Comprehensive FSG policies have been adopted by state and local governments through both executive and legislative policy approaches.

Jurisdiction	Policy Mechanism: Title (Year Adopted)	Scope	Guidelines Adopted
City of New York	Executive Order No. 122: Food Policy Coordinator for the City of New York and City Agency Food Standards (2008)	Requires all foods and beverages purchased, offered or served by city agencies or in connection with city contracts to meet standards	New York City Food Standards
State of Massachusetts	Executive Order No. 509: Establishing Nutrition Standards for Food Purchased and Served by State Agencies (2009)	Requires all foods served to agency client and dependent populations to meet standards	Massachusetts State Agency Food Standards
County of Los Angeles, CA	Board of Supervisors Motion: Healthy Food Promotion in LA County Food Services Contracts (2011)	Requires county departments to consult with the Department of Public Health prior to releasing any Request for Proposals for food service contracts to ensure that requirements in the contract promote healthy nutrition	Board of Supervisors Policy (updated nutrition standards forthcoming)
County of Santa Clara, CA	Board of Supervisors Motion: Santa Clara County Nutrition Standards and Guidance for Foods and Beverages (2012)	Requires all foods and beverages purchased, offered, or served by county agencies to meet standards	Santa Clara County Nutrition Standards

State of Washington	Executive Order 13-06: Improving the Health and Productivity of State Employees and Access to Healthy Food in State Facilities (2013)	Requires foods served through cafeterias, vending machines, on-site retail establishments, meetings and events, and foods served to agency client and dependent populations (excludes federal nutrition programs) to meet standards	Washington State Healthy Nutrition Guidelines
City of Philadelphia, PA	Executive Order No. 4-14: Establishing Nutrition Standards for Foods and Beverages Purchased, Prepared, or Served by City Agencies (2014)	Requires all foods and beverages purchased, offered or served by city agencies in connection with city contracts to meet nutrition standards	Philadelphia Nutrition Standards
County of San Diego, CA	Board of Supervisors Motion: Live Well San Diego Food System Initiative and Nutrition Standards (2016)	Required development of guidelines for nutrition and sustainability, which are incorporated into county agencies' food-related requests-for-proposals contracts on an ongoing basis	County of San Diego Eat Well Practices

[Where can I get more guidance about comprehensive policies and implementation?](#)

A Roadmap for Comprehensive Food Service Guidelines: Best Practices and Opportunities to Advance Nutrition through Food Service Guideline Policies in Diverse Public Settings can be [found online here](#).

For more information, contact Voices for Healthy Kids at advocatevac@heart.org.