



TITLE

HEALTHY EATING ENVIRONMENTS

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Senior Operating Officer, Nutrition, Food, Linen and Environmental Services

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NOTE: The first appearance of terms in bold in the body of this document (except titles) are defined terms – please refer to the Definitions section.

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OBJECTIVES

- To establish a **healthy eating environment** in **Alberta Health Services (AHS) facilities**.
- To promote **healthy eating** to help **AHS leaders**, staff, physicians, patients, volunteers, and visitors reach their health potential.

PRINCIPLES

AHS is committed to establishing a healthy eating environment in all AHS facilities. A healthy eating environment encourages healthy eating choices through the types and accessibility of the food available, food marketing, nutrition messages, organizational infrastructure and norms.

A healthy eating environment is essential to promote the consumption of **healthy foods**, which contribute to health, wellness, and chronic disease prevention and management. This policy is based on *Canada's Food Guide* and Alberta Nutrition Guidelines and is grounded by the principles outlined in the *Healthy Eating Environments Statement of Principles* (refer to Appendix A below).

This policy plays a part in the development of a safe, healthy and inclusive workplace, which is a priority of the AHS *Our People Strategy*. Multiple strategies are required for this to be successful, including raising awareness, engagement, priority actions and targets, and evaluation.

APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this document is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary).

ELEMENTS

1. Points of Emphasis

- 1.1 This policy is intended for use in all retail operations and AHS-funded activities, including but not limited to:
 - a) cafeterias;
 - b) vending machines;
 - c) auxiliary or volunteer-run operations;
 - d) third-party retail operations;
 - e) catering; and
 - f) fundraising.
- 1.2 **AHS people** and visitors have a shared responsibility to take actions to create a healthy eating environment.
- 1.3 **Site leadership** is uniquely positioned to lead changes at the facility level due to their scope of influence.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Healthy Eating Environment Steering Committee shall:
 - a) establish priority actions and inform and promote healthy eating environment strategies; and
 - b) monitor the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the strategies.
- 2.2 All AHS people, within their role and scope of influence, are encouraged to support actions to create a healthy eating environment.
- 2.3 AHS site leadership, within their role and in their area of influence, shall:
 - a) promote, endorse, and facilitate the establishment of healthy eating environments in their facilities;
 - b) advocate for the sale of healthy food in retail operations and vending machines;

- (i) See the *Nutrition Guidelines for Food and Beverages in AHS Facilities* and *Healthy Eating Environment in AHS: Gift Shops* for recommendations.
 - c) advocate for the provision of healthy food at AHS-funded meetings, events, and fundraising activities;
 - (i) See the AHS *Your Guide to Catering Requests* and *Healthy Eating Environment in AHS: Fundraising* respectively for more information.
 - (ii) All AHS-funded caterings shall be conducted in accordance with the AHS *Travel, Hospitality, and Working Session Expenses* Policy.
 - d) provide direction and timelines for actions within their area and sharing their experience with other leaders; and
 - e) work with AHS people, auxiliaries, foundations, and trusts to establish a healthy eating environment in AHS facilities.
- 2.4 AHS Workplace Health and Safety shall integrate healthy eating environment strategies into AHS health and wellness strategies.
- 2.5 In collaboration with other key AHS stakeholders, AHS Nutrition, Food, Linen & Environmental Services (NFLES) shall:
- a) maintain tools and resources to support healthy eating environment strategies;
 - b) evaluate healthy eating environment strategies for ongoing improvement and the development of evidence and best practice;
 - c) create healthy eating environments within their retail operations; and
 - d) inform and work collaboratively with third-party operators to monitor compliance with the Retail Food Service Contract and continuously improve their operations' availability and promotion of healthy food choices.
- 2.6 NFLES, Contracting, Procurement and Supply Management (CPSM), Legal Services, Capital Management and site leadership shall facilitate achievement of a healthy eating environment when working with facility design and contracts (e.g., vending, gift shops, and third-party operators), including but not limited to:
- a) selecting third-party operators that are committed to aligning with the AHS *Healthy Eating Environments* Policy and inclusion of relevant criteria in retail food service contracts with third-party operators;

- b) leasing of AHS facility space to retail operations that align with the AHS *Healthy Eating Environments* Policy (e.g., food for sale meets healthy food criteria); and
- c) facility design that supports staff and visitors to have access to healthy food choices and infrastructure to enable food brought from home/off-site to be eaten (e.g., equipment to store and heat food, and space to sit to eat food).

DEFINITIONS

Alberta Health Services (AHS) facility means any facility, property, or ground owned, operated, leased or funded by AHS.

AHS people means Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary).

Healthy eating means a way of eating that emphasizes a variety of nutritious food and beverages choices consistent with *Canada's Food Guide*.

Healthy eating environment means an environment that encourages healthy eating choices through the types and accessibility of food available, food marketing, nutrition messages, organizational infrastructure and norms.

- In AHS, this also includes the infrastructure (e.g., equipment and space involved in food preparation, distribution or consumption) and decision-making context (e.g., procedures, values, norms and leadership) that influence or direct food-related activities in AHS.

Healthy food means food and beverages listed in *Canada Food Guide Canada's Dietary Guideline*, which emphasizes vegetables, fruit, whole grains, protein foods and water. These foods are prepared and served in a way that aligns with national and provincial recommendations for sugar, sodium and fats.

Site leadership means the individual(s) responsible for a specific facility of operation within AHS.

REFERENCES

- Appendix A: *Healthy Eating Environments Statement of Principles*
- Alberta Health Services Governance Documents:
 - *Travel, Hospitality, and Working Session Expenses Policy* (#1122)
- Alberta Health Services Resources:
 - *Healthy Eating Environment in AHS: Fundraising*
 - *Healthy Eating Environment in AHS: Gift Shops*
 - *Nutrition Guidelines for Foods and Beverages in AHS Facilities*
 - *Your Guide to Catering Requests*
- Non-Alberta Health Services Documents:
 - *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Adults* (Alberta Health)

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- *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* (Alberta Health)
- *Canada's Food Guide* (Health Canada)

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APPENDIX A

Healthy Eating Environments Statement of Principles**1. Promoting the well-being of AHS people, patients and families**

Nutrition is one of the leading risk factors for chronic diseases in Canada. Our environment affects what and how much we eat or drink. Healthy choices are possible when they are available and encouraged. The more available and accessible healthy foods are, the more likely they will be consumed. Conversely, an environment where less healthy foods are readily available and promoted contributes to poor nutrition and health.

A healthy eating environment is shown to be one of the most effective public health strategies to improve nutrition. At AHS, this means increasing the proportion of healthy foods available and promoting them throughout our facilities and at events. A healthy eating environment can help AHS people, patients and families improve their nutritional status, which contributes to their health, wellness, quality of life and productivity.

2. AHS as a leader for health

Albertans and communities look to AHS as a leader for health. We teach Albertans how to eat healthy at home, work and in the community. Building a healthy eating environment in AHS puts our words into action. This policy supports Health Canada's recommendation that foods and beverages offered in publicly-funded institutions should align with *Canada's Dietary Guidelines*.

We respect the right of individuals to make food choices based on their food preferences and cultural needs. The policy is about what is sold in AHS facilities or provided at AHS-funded meetings and events as a way to ensure healthy choices are available and promoted. It does not affect what individuals choose to bring in from outside AHS facilities.

3. Maintaining fiscal accountability

The economic burden of unhealthy eating in Canada is estimated to cost \$5.1 billion in direct health care expenses and \$8.7 billion in indirect expenses each year. Supporting AHS people, patients and families with healthy eating can contribute to cost savings for our health system.

As changes to improve the food environment are implemented, fiscal accountability will be maintained by delivering healthy food choices within operating budgets. The impact of changes on sales and total revenue at retail operations is closely monitored. Although healthy foods often have a smaller profit margin compared to less healthy choices, strategies like marketing, pricing and product placement can be used to minimize impact to revenue.