

A Report and  
Recommendations by  
the Workgroup on  
Food Procurement  
Guidelines to the:

New York State  
Council on Food Policy

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## I. Charge

The New York State Council on Food Policy appointed a Workgroup to develop a Report and Recommendations on Food Procurement Guidelines for New York State agencies. For the purpose of this document, these guidelines would refer to food purchased, provided or made available such that key nutrient levels either meet, or do not exceed, certain standards established as part of these guidelines. Such procurement policies can use the purchasing power of government to make an impact on food availability and add to the overall demand for more healthful products. Procurement policies can model healthier food environments, potentially drive reformulation of foods, and have an impact on diverse settings.

## II. Purpose

Today's foods have changed from the early 1900s. There is more sodium (salt), sweeteners (sugar) and fats. There are many more processed foods. There are more nutrient-poor foods, such as soft drinks (sugar-sweetened drinks), salty snacks, sweets and desserts. Portion sizes have increased. Food consumption (total calories) has increased. Because these extra calories have not been accompanied by an increase in physical activity, Americans are fatter than ever, with increased rates of obesity and associated obesity-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and arthritis.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans are reviewed and updated every five years. They represent evidence-based nutritional information and recommendations for Americans over two years of age. The most recent version, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 (DGA) emphasize three major goals for Americans:

- Balance calories with physical activity to maintain weight
- Consume more of certain foods and nutrients such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products and seafood
- Consume fewer foods with sodium (salt), saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, added sugars, and refined grains.

The DGA recommendations are intended to help people choose a healthy diet. For persons who are served foods through state or local agencies, food procurement guidelines can help the agencies be critical players in transforming the food system to help prevent the development of risk factors, such as high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, or increased blood glucose, help slow rising rates of chronic diseases, such as coronary heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, promote overall health, and reduce excess health care costs for chronic disease management. This is especially important in settings where a majority of foods are provided by the state agency, such as prisons or residential settings.

Agencies can make a difference by adopting food procurement policies for the populations that they serve in addition to food purchasing policies and practices in their own facilities that promote healthful food in line with the DGA. In turn, these policies can contribute to improving the health of not only the citizens served by city and state agencies, but also their employees

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as other groups, have recommended that governments, businesses and large-scale organizations that purchase or distribute food, can improve the food supply by establishing specifications for the foods they purchase, procure, or contract for distribution.

Food procurement policies can be designed to make healthier food more readily available, affordable, and appealing. These policies can also work to change individual factors (e.g., knowledge of how to choose healthy options), social factors (e.g., social norms), and environmental factors (e.g., access to healthy options). Food procurement policies use existing food dollars to create a more nutritious food environment and drive demand toward increased availability and demand for more healthful products.

### **III. Policy Development**

A workgroup of members of the New York State Council on Food Policy was formed in April 2011. The Workgroup was augmented by staff from the NYS Department of Health and the New York Academy of Medicine. As a first step, an environmental scan was conducted of state agencies. All state agencies that provide food and meals were surveyed to provide a better understanding of how agencies procure and/or contract for food and beverages, and whether they follow the DGA. Most of the agencies reported using the DGA to varying degrees. None had procurement policies around specific nutrients.

Government agencies in several large cities, states, and the federal government have developed, published, and/or implemented food procurement policies. The workgroup spoke to numerous government agencies including the New York City Department of Health and Hygiene, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and Delaware Parks and Recreation. In addition, members researched many documents including, the federal Department of Health and Human Services food procurement policies and received input from the NYS Office of General Services.

#### **IV. Guidelines for Purchased Food**

The Food Procurement Guidelines workgroup has agreed on the following:

- State Agencies that procure, provide, and/or contract for foods and beverages have an obligation to provide food that is safe and nutritious.
- The most recent version of the DGA, developed using the most up-to-date evidence-based consensus of the scientific community, should be used to provide guidance for the optimal nutrition for New Yorkers.
- The typical diet of Americans is not consistent with the DGA. Currently Americans consume less than recommended intakes for whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk/milk products, and excessive amounts of solid fats, saturated fats, added sugars, refined grains and sodium.
- State Agencies that follow guidelines for meals, snacks, and specific foods will improve the nutritional value of the foods procured, served or contracted, improve the nutrition, promote health and help to reduce the risk for chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity and diabetes of New Yorkers.

Listed below are a set of recommended nutrition standards for foods and beverages procured, purchased and/or served by NYS agencies. Adopting and implementing the nutrition standards would help ensure that foods and beverages provided or served by agencies contribute to a diet consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010.

These standards are defined per serving of food. The serving size is based on FDA-established lists of "Reference Amounts Customarily Consumed per Eating Occasion" and is used on the Nutrition Facts Panel, unless otherwise noted.

It's also recommended that where possible, and to the extent allowed by law, that preference be given to foods from local NYS growers/processors for optimal nutritional value. Where NYS products are not available and/or accessible, preference should be given to domestic, American grown and produced foods. The nutritional value of fresh produce can decline as the length of time between its harvest and consumption increases. Similarly, imported produce also has lessened nutritional value due to having to be harvested prematurely (which is done so that it may be shipped long distances).

## A. Nutrient Standards:

- **Artificial Trans fat:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Purchase foods that have no synthetic sources of trans fats. Purchase food with “0 grams” trans fat. Current FDA labeling regulations allow manufacturers of foods packaged for direct sale to consumers in retail markets to list trans fat content as “0 grams” if the product contains less than 0.5 grams per serving.

- **Sodium:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ All individual items should contain 480 mg or less sodium per serving, unless otherwise stated below.
- ✓ For agencies serving populations with a majority of the population is 51 years or older, all individual items should contain ≤ 360 mg sodium per serving.\*

*Above Standard*

- ✓ Purchase “low sodium” (i.e., 140 mg or less sodium per serving), “reduced sodium” (i.e., original sodium level reduced by 25%), or no added salt whenever feasible.

## B. Food Category Standards:

- **Beverages**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ ≤ 10 calories per 8 fl. oz. for beverages other than milk, 100% fruit or vegetable juice, or juice combined with water or carbonated water and with no caloric sweeteners.
- ✓ If purchasing juice, only 100% fruit or vegetable juice.

- **Dairy:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Milk is 1% or fat free and unsweetened. (Flavored milk is not recommended for children under five. For children ages five-18 years flavored milks are permitted and should be ≤ 180 calories per 8 oz. serving).
- ✓ Any fluid milk substitute (e.g., soymilk) contains ≤ 100 calories per 8 oz. (For children ages 5-18 years flavored fluid milk substitutes are permitted and should contain <\_180 calories per serving).
- ✓ Purchase low-fat or non-fat yogurt.

*Above Standard*

- ✓ Purchase plain yogurt or yogurt with ≤ 30 g sugar per 8 oz or equivalent (e.g., ≤ 15 g sugar per 4 oz, ≤ 23 g sugar per 6 oz).
- ✓ Purchase lower/reduced sodium cheese.
- ✓ Purchase lower/reduced fat cheese.

- **Bread, pasta, and other grains and starches:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Sliced sandwich bread contains  $\leq 180$  mg sodium per serving, be whole wheat or whole grain and contain  $\geq 2$  g fiber per serving (whole wheat/whole grain should be listed as the first ingredient).
- ✓ Other baked goods (e.g., dinner rolls, muffins, bagels, tortillas) contain  $\leq 290$  mg sodium per serving.

*Above Standard*

- ✓ Purchase 100% whole grain pasta, whole grain bread and whole grain baked goods (whole grain or multi-grain should be listed as the first ingredient).
- ✓ Purchase brown rice.

- **Cereal:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Cereal contains  $\leq 215$  mg sodium per serving,  $\leq 10$  g sugar per serving, and  $\geq 2$  g fiber per serving.
- ✓ For child care facilities, cereal contains  $\leq 6$  g sugar per serving in addition to sodium and fiber standards. Cereals that contain dried cranberries, dates, and/or raisins are exempt from the sugar standard due to the limited availability of this product type that meets the sugar standard. Cereals must still meet fiber and sodium standards.

- **Vegetables:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Canned/frozen vegetables and beans contain  $\leq 140$  mg sodium per serving.

*Above Standard*

- ✓ Purchase no salt added.

- **Fruits:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Fruit to be canned in unsweetened juice or water. Fruit canned in syrup should not be purchased. Frozen fruit to be frozen without sugar or syrup.

- **Tuna, salmon and other seafood:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Canned and frozen seafood contain  $\leq 290$  mg sodium per serving.

*Above Standard*

Purchase no salt added.

- **Poultry:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Canned/frozen poultry contain  $\leq 290$  mg sodium per serving.

*Above Standard*

Purchase at least 90% lean ground poultry or skinless poultry

- **Beef and pork:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Canned beef/pork contains  $\leq 480$  mg sodium per serving.

*Above Standard*

- ✓ Purchase “extra lean” beef and pork (total fat  $\leq 5\%$ ) and at least 90% lean ground beef.
- ✓ Purchase bacon containing  $\leq 290$  mg sodium per serving.

- **Luncheon meat:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Luncheon meat to contain  $\leq 480$  mg sodium per serving.

- **Condiments and sauces:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Salad dressings contain  $\leq 290$  mg sodium per serving.
- ✓ Sauces, including tomato, contain  $\leq 480$  mg sodium per serving.

*Above Standard*

- ✓ Purchase lower sodium condiments and sauces, such as reduced sodium soy sauce.
- ✓ Purchase low-fat or reduced-fat versions

- **Portion controlled items and other convenience foods:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Portion controlled items and other convenience foods such as breaded chicken and veal patties, frozen French toast and waffles contain  $\leq 480$  mg sodium per serving.

*Above Standard*

- ✓ Purchase low-fat or reduced-fat options.

- **Frozen whole meals:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Frozen whole meals contain  $\leq 35\%$  of the daily sodium limit (adults:  $\leq 805$  mg, children  $\leq 770$ mg, seniors  $\leq 525$  mg)\*.

- **Soup and Broth:**

*Standard Criteria*

- ✓ Sodium  $\leq 480$  mg.

*Above Standard*

- ✓ Purchase low-fat.

- **No foods requiring deep frying should be purchased or provided.**

\* The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 recommend that daily sodium intake be less than 2,300 milligrams (mg), and for persons who are 51 years and older and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease, daily sodium intake should be limited to 1,500 mg.

\*\* Note regarding populations with religious or special dietary food needs:

If an agency cannot meet purchased food standards due to a lack of availability of food items that meet the specific needs of the population they serve (e.g., packaged kosher foods), the agency should look to find suitable replacements for these products.

## **V. Implementation**

Establishing a procurement policy is one strategy that can be undertaken to support healthful changes to foods that are offered, served, and consumed and will complement other strategies and efforts. Some governments and organizations already have standards related to the foods they offer and serve.

Food procurement policies can be adopted through a variety of official means; among them are statutes, ordinances, administrative regulations, executive orders, and other formal statements.

Successful implementation of the standards will require staff training and technical assistance. It will also require gradual change to allow time for industry adjustment, and, in some cases, people's palates to adjust to the new foods.

These Food Procurement Guidelines should be updated at least every 5 years when the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* are updated

## VI. References

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