

Healthy Hospital Practice to Practice Series (P2P)

Issue #2



Improving Hospital Food and Beverage Environments

The CDC supports making the healthy choice the easy choice in every community setting.

As major employers and health leaders, hospitals can help establish strong community norms for promoting healthy and active living through nutritious food and beverage, opportunities for physical activity, support for breastfeeding, and tobacco-free environments. This P2P Series presents case studies of hospitals improving their environment to better support the health of their employees and embody the mission of their organization.

IN THIS ISSUE...

Fairview Hospital and Baptist Health South Florida share how they are supporting employee health by changing their food and beverage policies and practices.

Saying No to Serving Sugar Drinks

Key Considerations

- Review your hospital food and beverage contract - it may not specify what type of foods and drinks must be purchased, giving foodservice more flexibility to order healthier options.
- Engage all staff in the hospital mission to create a healthy community- it can increase support for making healthy changes.

At **Fairview Hospital**, a 25-bed critical access hospital located in the southwest corner of Massachusetts, the Foodservice staff is leading the way to create a healthier and sustainable environment. In 2010, Fairview became one of the first U.S. hospitals to phase out sugar-sweetened beverages by taking them off the patient menu when it was instituting a new room-service style program. Soon after, Fairview's catering team discontinued the traditional service of soda and cookies at staff meetings, substituting pitchers of filtered water, unsweetened ice tea and fresh fruit. The final step was eliminating sugar drinks from the cafeteria and vending machines. Because the beverage distributor contract did not specify that sugar drinks must be sold, Foodservice Director Roger Knysh simply changed his order to beverages without added sugar.

Fairview has received publicity from being the first hospital to carry out this initiative and the local community has responded positively. "The hospital has presented itself as a leader in making healthier life choices. As the health care provider, this expands our role in healthcare and is positive from a community image standpoint" says Lauren Smith, Director of Community Relations at Fairview. Efforts to become a healthier environment are ongoing and the hospital staff pay close attention to what's going on among other hospitals, schools, and businesses to identify new opportunities and partnerships. "We are always seeking new ways to respond to these issues in collaboration with others. To be successful, the message must reach people continuously. The fight against obesity is bigger than we are. We need all hands on deck to fight it," said Knysh

Wellness has its Advantages

Baptist Health South Florida employs 15,000 people in 6 hospitals from the Florida Keys to Monroe, Dade and Broward counties. Baptist Health President, Brian Keeley, had a vision of a healthier workforce and that meant having healthier food options inside the hospital. Employees are the ones eating most of the meals served in the cafeteria and Keeley wanted them to have the opportunity to make healthier choices. One way the Baptist Health staff carried this out was by creating a "Wellness Advantage Meal" and offering it daily. The Wellness Advantage Meal is a balanced meal that has: <600 calories, <30% calories from fat, <10% calories from saturated fat and <800mg of sodium per meal and all for just \$3.00. These portion-controlled meals include a lean protein, vegetable, whole grain and Baptist Health spring water. "In this program we're incentivizing our employees to choose a healthier meal by reducing the price" says Natalie Castro-Romero, Wellness Dietician. In 2010, Baptist Health sold over 150,000 Wellness Advantage Meals to employees and visitors.

Maintaining the low price is a strategy Baptist Health continuously works at, especially as food prices have gone up. "What helped our wellness team with this, is the fact that our President said this is what he wants, so the foodservice directors came up with other ways to manage the cost" says Romero. Romero reiterates Keeley's vision, "We want to provide this because it's the right thing to do and we know at the end of the day it's going to make our employees healthier and end up saving the organization money on healthcare." Efforts at Baptist Health continue in part due to an annual hospital retreat that allows foodservice directors and the wellness team to work together, this creates a shared goal and reminds everyone why they're doing what they're doing.



Key Considerations

- *Direct encouragement from hospital executive staff motivates employees to find ways to provide healthy options.*
- *Develop committees that include vendors, hospital leaders, foodservice and wellness employees to create a common goal of improving health.*
- *Cultivate strong working relationships between foodservice and wellness departments to help generate healthier practices and policies that work for everyone.*

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