

DNPAO State Program Highlights

Promoting Menu Labeling Policies and Restaurant Programs



State-Based Programs

The Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program (NPAO) is a cooperative agreement between the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO) and 25 state health departments. The program goal is to prevent and control obesity and other chronic diseases through healthful eating and physical activity.

DNPAO Target Areas

The state programs develop strategies to leverage resources and coordinate statewide efforts with multiple partners to address all of the following DNPAO principal target areas:

- Increase physical activity
- Increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables
- Decrease the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages
- Increase breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity
- **Reduce the consumption of high-energy-dense foods**
- Decrease television viewing

Strategies Related to Energy Density

DNPAO developed six guidance documents to provide assistance and direction regarding each of the principal target areas. The guidance document developed to reduce the consumption of high-energy-dense foods includes the following strategies:

- **Promote menu labeling in restaurants**
- **Support restaurant programs that offer and promote healthier food choices**
- Improve supermarket access in underserved areas
- Improve existing small stores in underserved areas
- Ensure that students have only appealing, healthy choices in foods and beverages offered outside of the school meals program
- Expand curriculum-based strategies that support nutrition standards
- Ensure that regulations, policies, and legislation at all levels promote healthier foods in child care settings
- Promote healthier foods at workplace cafeterias, in workplace vending machines, and at meetings and conferences

Promoting Menu Labeling Policies and Restaurant Programs

Menu labeling involves providing the nutritional content of foods on menus, menu boards, and food item tags at the point-of-purchase in fast-food and full-service restaurants. Menu labeling legislation typically requires that menu boards post calorie information adjacent to food items in a font, format, and size that are visible from the ordering line and are as prominent as the name and price of the food item.

Restaurant programs can improve the health of customers by offering and promoting healthier food choices. These programs affect individuals by influencing availability, access, pricing; providing point-of-purchase information; or promoting the consumption of healthier foods.

State Activities Promoting Menu Labeling Policies and Restaurant Programs

Colorado

Colorado Smart Meal Restaurant and Eating Establishment Program

The Smart Meal Seal Program is a practice-tested intervention designed to encourage the availability of healthier menu options in restaurants and other eating establishments, and the selection of healthier options by customers with a goal of improving the eating habits of individuals who frequently dine out. The program is facilitated and managed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, but also includes a training component that has allowed other community partners and states to adopt the program.

The purpose of the program is to assist restaurant customers in identifying menu items that meet specific nutritional requirements. These standards were developed from sources such as the American Heart Association, 5 A Day for Better Health, and the Food and Drug Administration's nutrition labeling food guidelines. All qualifying menu items undergo nutritional analysis by an independent menu analysis service before being approved for the Smart Meal Seal.

Participating restaurants can showcase entrees that are lower in fat, calories, and sodium and include components such as beans, whole grains, fruits or vegetables by highlighting them with the Smart Meal Seal.

Since the program began in 2006, 20 different restaurants representing more than 200 locations have adopted the program, providing 1,630 Smart Meal choices each day. An evaluation conducted from July 2007 to June 2008 revealed statistically significant increases in Smart Meal sales and statistically significant decreases in the sales of side orders, including French fries, soft drinks, cookies, pies, and ice cream. In addition, the Smart Meal Program has been identified by the University of North Carolina's Center of Excellence for Training and Research Translation as a practice-tested intervention for restaurants and eating establishments (<http://www.center-trt.org>).

In March 2010, the Smart Meal Program received funding to expand, promote, and increase program capacity. With this funding, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment intends to develop a marketing plan as well as hire additional part-time staff.

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New York

Public Education on Menu Labeling

The New York State Department of Health recently received funding to implement public health education activities related to menu labeling. These efforts will include the development, implementation, and evaluation of a mass media calorie awareness campaign in counties with menu labeling legislation. In addition, supporting educational materials will be developed for community organizations.



Two key messages will be emphasized in the campaign, (1) adults should only consume 2,000 calories per day and (2) meals purchased at restaurants often contribute to a significant proportion of a person's daily calories.

To date, menu labeling legislation has passed in six New York State counties as well as New York City. Four of these counties and New York City plan to continue enforcing the legislation until federal menu labeling legislation is implemented. These efforts have progressed with the formation of a workgroup comprised of various state- and county-level partners to select a target population and provide input and feedback during the development of the media campaign and the educational materials.

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Tennessee

Menu Labeling Efforts in Tennessee State Parks

In September 2010, the Tennessee Department of Health transitioned into the implementation phase of their Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity State Plan by incorporating the strategy of menu labeling into all food venues. To begin adopting this strategy, efforts have been focused on labeling calorie content in foods served at stands and restaurants in state-managed food service facilities in Tennessee State Parks. This initiative began with analysis of approximately 100 recipes in each state park by community nutrition staff and dietetic interns at the Tennessee Department of Health. Calorie cards were then created and printed for each food item, which illustrated the name of the food, portion size, and the number of calories.

Future plans for this initiative include replicating the steps made for the implementation of menu labeling in state parks to other state-sponsored food service facilities.

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Need more information?

Visit the CDC DNPAO website to learn more information about our funded state programs:
<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/index.html>