

Healthy Hospital Practice to Practice Series (P2P)

Issue #11

Hospitals Partnering with Public Health to Improve Food Environments: Part 1

CDC supports making the healthy choice the easy choice.

As major employers and health leaders, hospitals can help establish norms for promoting healthy and active living.

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Read how two hospital systems in New York City partnered with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) on the Healthy Hospital Food Initiative (HHFI), a standards-based approach, to improve their vending machine environments.

Stakeholder Engagement

Maimonides Medical Center, established in 1911, has a thriving nonprofit Jewish glatt kosher hospital among its facilities. The medical center employs more than 6,500 hospital staff and has 711 beds. Pam Brier, CEO at Maimonides, led the initiative to make vending machines healthier. Based on the driving force of the NYC Standards for Food Vending Machines (Standards) and as part of the Healthy Hospital Food Initiative (HHFI), the hospital changed the four food and food/beverage vending machines within the facility. Most of the previously sold products were high in sodium and fat and low in fiber. With the change, the organization looked for products that would not only meet the Standards, but would also be glatt kosher, meeting the specifications of the Rabbinical Council.

Director of Nutritional Services at Maimomides, Marvo Forde, and the Clinical Nutrition Manager, Ninel Novak, met with the vendor to explain the plans to change the vending machine selections and add healthier choices.

The DOHMH provided technical assistance through the implementation process by communicating with Maimonides and the vendor frequently to ensure a thorough understanding of the Standards. They also assisted by conducting on-site assessments of the vending machines, providing Maimonides with lists of example items meeting the Standards, and reviewing nutritional content of products stocked by the vendor.

The vendor provided important support for the program by working hard to find items that would meet both the NYC standards and the facility's glatt kosher standards.

Partnerships were important for moving the program forward. "Partners included the purchasing manager, the rabbinical staff, the clinical manager, patient service manager, the chef, and the wellness co-chairs," said Marvo Forde.

Key Considerations

- *Engage your key stakeholders throughout your process so that their input can help implement the change.*
- *Provide feedback and follow-up to all partners to help keep them involved in the process.*



Another success factor was staff's continual reporting to all partners. This helped the project move quickly.

The program has not done a cost analysis yet. However, they have reviewed purchased items to determine the most and least popular items so that they can work with the vendor to stock the healthier items that are more likely to sell.

Ninel Novak said, "It is important to set your goals, have a dedicated person to monitor the process, find a champion, and have support from the top-down".

Healthy Defaults: "The Right Thing to Do"

The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) is the one of the largest municipal healthcare system in the country, serving 1.4 million New Yorkers annually. In 2009, HHC began the process of changing the contents of the 400 beverage machines within their 15 facilities. This change was sparked by the motivation of the concerned health care providers over the placement of beverage machines and the adoption of the citywide NYC Standards for Beverage Vending Machines.

HHC started negotiating with their vendor to modify the machines to meet the Standards, which included changing the advertising on the outside of the machines from images of sugary beverages to bottled water. The DOHMH facilitated the transition by providing technical assistance. For example, they showed the vendor how to stock a machine by using plan-o-grams, to provide a visual representation of the Standards.

Subsequent to the city's adoption of the Standards, HHC processed and executed an amendment to their beverage vending machine contract. Joseph Maltese, director of Procurement Services and Operations for HHC, said that the objective of the amendment was to

modify the product mix pursuant to and in compliance with the Standards, which was perceived by HHC as the "right thing to do." To date, substantive changes have been made to HHC's beverage machines.

The machines now have a 12 beverage capacity and dispense a mix that includes four waters, 6 diet drinks and 2 sugary drinks that are all 12 ounces or less. The water was moved to the top of the machines and the sugary beverages were placed at the bottom.

Making this change has required collective organizational persistence, commitment, and willingness to make contractual changes to HHC's beverage vending machine business model. Ultimately, and when feasible, Joseph Maltese said that it is important to incorporate the Standards in to the contract with the vendor, and a "monitoring system should be implemented to ensure machines are consistently stocked per the Standards."

HHC has used this change as an opportunity to provide education to the public. There has been an open dialogue at the hospitals and with local stakeholder groups to become more aware about the food and beverages being served and their effects on health.



Key Considerations

- *Consider the outside of the vending machine in addition to its products.*
- *Internally review your guidelines and use this information to start discussions with your partners and vending contractors on promoting healthier choices and incorporating standards.*
- *To make sustainable changes, develop a monitoring system to assure machines are consistently stocked to your specifications.*