PREVIEW

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HEALTHY VENDING TOOLKIT
making the healthy choice the easy choice

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Introduction

Today’s generation of youth is a generation of many firsts. They are the first generation native to the Internet. They are more culturally diverse than any other generation. They are also the most educated generation in American history and may be the first generation to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

The childhood obesity epidemic is at an all-time high, with an estimated 30 percent of youth in the United States being overweight or obese. Obesity has been linked to numerous diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. Recent studies have shown that obesity-related diseases are the second leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S.

Society currently promotes and supports unhealthy eating and discourages active lifestyles, which play a key role in the childhood obesity epidemic in the U.S. The food environment is one of the most influential factors impacting childhood obesity rates. Highly processed foods with little to no nutritional value are now readily available everywhere you go, from middle and high schools, gyms, workplaces, and even shopping centers. Notoriously known for offering food and beverages that are high in calories, sugar, salt and fat, combined with the large portion sizes, relatively low prices, and extensive advertising, a cultural norm is being set that encourages unhealthy eating everywhere you go.
By working with vending companies and changing vending locations, the environments can be supportive to make healthier foods and beverages more readily available. Making the healthy choice the easy and most accessible choice helps to reverse the cultural norm. These changes will help ensure that today’s generation of youth will not be the first generation to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

**Where Do I Start?**

Are you interested in creating healthy vending environments, but are not sure where to start? This guide will equip you with the information you need and guide you on your quest to healthier vending.

**Assess the Situation**
The first step towards healthy vending is to assess the current status of vending machines.

- How many vending machines are there currently?
- Where are the vending machines located?
- Who has access to the vending machines?
- What is the name of the vendor(s) the vending machines are operated by?
- Are you under a contract with that vendor?
- Who serves as the contact person between your site and the vendor(s)?
- Does the site receive any of the revenue from the machines? If so, how much and what are the funds used for?
- What is currently being offered in the vending machines?
- Does the site currently have a policy regarding vending machines?

If you want to engage youth in your healthy vending process or if youth plan to lead this initiative they can ask additional questions like:

- How many vending machines are there?
- Are the vending machines easily accessible?
- Who generally uses the vending machines?
- How healthy are the foods and beverages offered in the vending machines? (see Appendix 1 to define healthy)
- What food and beverage items would you like to see in the vending machines?