Creating Healthful Food Environments Through Policy Change: A Toolkit for Faith-Based Organizations

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SECTION 1.

INTRODUCTION:

PURPOSE AND INTENDED USE
WHY ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS ARE NEEDED
IMPORTANCE OF IMPLEMENTING POLICY IN THE FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY

TOOLKIT ORGANIZATION
PURPOSE AND INTENDED USE

Creating Healthful Food Environments Through Policy Change: A Toolkit for Faith-Based Organizations provides practical information to members of the faith-based community for use when developing, adopting, and implementing a food and beverage policy within their organization. For the purposes of this Toolkit, the term “food and beverage policy” refers to a policy officially adopted by a faith-based organization (FBO) (e.g., a church, parish, temple, mosque) requiring that the food it purchases, provides, or sells to members and guests meets guidelines established by public health authorities. Such a policy might, for example, indicate the types and kinds and relative amounts of foods served at meetings and events (e.g., “When serving lunch, offer entrées that are baked, broiled, grilled, roasted, or steamed, rather than fried.”) A policy might also specify types and relative amounts of beverages that are served (e.g., “At least 50% of all beverages served must be non-sugar-sweetened beverages, such as water, 100% fruit juice, non-caloric soft drinks or very-low-calorie drink mixes.”)

Anyone connected to a faith-based organization can become involved with the policy-making process and can use this Toolkit to help effect organizational change. One does not need a background in nutrition, public health, or even public policy to effect change.

Those with passion and determination, a concern for human health and well-being, and who believe in social justice can work towards improving the food environment in their faith-based organization through policy development and implementation.

WHY ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS ARE NEEDED

According to the US Department of Agriculture, food consumption in the US has increased over the past 40 years. In 1970, intake averaged 2,234 calories per person. Today, intake averages 2,757 calories per person—an increase of over 500 calories per day! Despite the increase in total caloric intake, Americans fail to consume the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. Intake of sodium, solid fats (saturated fats and trans fatty acids), and added sugars is higher than recommended.

Dietary factors are associated with 4 of the 10 leading causes of death: coronary heart disease, some types of cancer, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions. Over 65% of adult Americans are overweight or obese, and 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese. At the same time, nearly 15% of American households are food insecure, and are unable to acquire adequate food to meet their needs because of insufficient money or other
resources for food. Some racial and ethnic population groups are disproportionately affected by the high rates of food insecurity, overweight and obesity, and diet-associated chronic diseases. Health conditions related to dietary factors cost society over $200 billion each year in medical expenses and lost productivity.

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans remind us that eating and physical activity patterns focused on consuming fewer calories, making informed food choices, and being physically active can help us attain and maintain a healthy weight, reduce risk of chronic disease, and promote overall health. Despite consistent messaging and Americans’ self-described familiarity with the Dietary Guidelines, behavior change has been slow. Education alone does not work.

The Social Ecological Model provides a framework for showing the multiple influences on community health, and barriers to health improvement. Understanding these influences and barriers aids in developing strong, actionable community strategies. Research has indicated that strategies that focus on organizations, communities, and policies are more effective than strategies that focus primarily on educating individuals. The World Health Organization, Institute of Medicine, the International Obesity Task Force, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have identified environmental and policy interventions as the most promising strategies for creating population-wide improvements in eating, physical activity, and weight status.
The goal of environmental change is to make the environment favorable for, or supportive of the new behavior. One example of an environmental change that supports behavioral change is replacing sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) with water in school vending machines and student stores. Policy complements education and environmental change. For example, a school wellness policy that prohibits the on-campus sale of SSB enables systemic and environmental changes to be enacted. Thus, a school wellness policy coupled with environmental change can make water (the healthful choice) the easy choice.

Policy can ensure the performance of a desirable behavior when it would be difficult to carry out because of social pressure to conform to a different standard (e.g., the consumption of SSBs over water among teens.) Organizational policies regarding school, worksite, and community food environments influence people’s food choices and eating patterns. Heretofore, there has been little examination of the effect of policy on food choice in faith-based organizations.

**IMPORTANCE OF IMPLEMENTING POLICY IN THE FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY**

As integral and vital elements of every community, faith institutions are a fundamental part of the lives of millions of Americans. They are the places Americans go to for guidance and support. Given the clear importance of lifestyle behaviors on health and well-being, and the fundamental influence of faith and faith-based relationships in providing the benchmark for many American’s lives, it is apparent that faith communities can play a significant role in encouraging and supporting their members to make healthful lifestyle choices by implementing food and beverage policies.

**WHY FOCUS ON FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS?**

- FBOs care about the overall health and well-being of their members.
- People of different ages, ethnicities, genders, socio-economic and educational status attend worship services and FBO-sponsored activities.
- Those who regularly attend services and FBO-sponsored activities have repeated exposure to policies and practices that can have a positive influence on their behaviors and subsequent health outcomes.
- Trusted individuals (e.g. pastors, lay leaders) are uniquely positioned to influence their members/parishioners to practice healthful behaviors.
- Built-in social networks can provide support for policy and behavioral change.
- FBOs are involved in all life-cycle events, from birth to death, and nutrition influences health throughout the lifespan.
- Foods and beverages typically served and/or sold at FBO events are sweet, high fat, and energy dense. Policy can improve these offerings.
This Toolkit provides practical, hands-on, user-friendly tools that make it possible for members of the faith-based community to take a step-by-step approach to policy development and implementation. The Toolkit can be used by members of any FBO interested in providing a more healthful food environment for their members and guests.

The Toolkit is divided into 4 main sections:

- **Section 2:** Provides a stepwise guide to developing a food and beverage policy, from building the team, to drafting the policy, to final policy adoption.

- **Section 3:** Describes the FBO Nutrition Environmental Assessment Tool, which can be used to track foods & beverages provided to members, and changes resulting from policy implementation.

- **Section 4:** Provides procurement lists, and other helpful tools to support healthful food purchase and preparation.

- **Section 5:** Provides over 50 health and nutrition columns, in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, that can be included in a FBO’s weekly newsletter or bulletin, and used to support healthful diet and lifestyle choices.

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REFERENCES CITED


SECTION 2.

A STEPWISE APPROACH TO DEVELOPING A FOOD & BEVERAGE POLICY IN A FBO

SELECTED RESOURCES

A Stepwise Approach to Policy Development in a FBO

Section 2.2

1. Solicit Leadership Buy-in and Endorsement
2. Assemble Your Committee/Ministry
3. Establish a Mission, Identity, Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan
4. Introduce Committee to the Faith Community
5. Assess Opportunities and Barriers
6. Draft Policy
7. Present Policy to, and Obtain Feedback from Members
8. Revise Policy if Necessary
9. Ask Leadership to Accept Policy
10. Publicize Policy to Members

2a. Conduct FBO-NEAT
It goes without saying that the support of your faith community leadership is essential before undertaking any policy work. While the leadership does not have to be actively involved in implementing policy changes, their endorsement sends an important and essential message of support to the full membership body. Before approaching your leaders, prepare a summary of your ideas, including the rationale for your proposed policy. Then follow formal organizational procedures to arrange a meeting to gather leadership support for, and interest in creating a food and beverage policy. Become familiar with and share the relationship of health and well-being to your particular body of faith. Remember: the better prepared you are, the more likely you are to achieve the endorsement and enthusiasm you need to be successful.

Even the most dedicated volunteer will need others to support their efforts. Forming a committee or ministry is the next step. The committee will develop the policy, and may also be involved with its implementation and enforcement. Together, your committee will establish the character of your ministry, and determine its success. Depending on the size and resources of your FBO, the committee may be comprised of 6 to 12 volunteers and/or those appointed by leadership. Above all, seek to include those who share a genuine commitment to accomplishing the program’s mission and overall success and who will generate interest and enthusiasm among the larger membership.

**Use these questions to help identify the right individuals for your committee.**

- Who is already interested in promoting good health?
- Who has passion and personal experience in dealing with health issues?
- What health ministries already exist in the faith community? Who is involved?
- What groups should be represented on the committee.
- Which staff members need to be involved to make your program run smoothly.
- Whose involvement or support would impact a larger group.
- Whose involvement or support is necessary for maintaining program logistics.
- Who has access to the resources necessary to maintain the program.

It’s important to conduct a baseline assessment of the food environment to determine areas that need improvement that can be targeted by a food and beverage policy. The Faith-Based Organization Nutrition Environment Assessment Tool (FBO-NEAT), described in Section 3 of this Toolkit, can be used to conduct the assessment. The FBO-NEAT can also be used to track changes over time, and assess policy impact.
Every undertaking should have a mission or a purpose; in short, a reason for doing what you are doing. Your mission statement should reflect just that. An effective mission statement accurately explains why your program exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. Your mission statement must resonate not only with your faith community and program leadership, but with all program volunteers and the constituencies and individuals that the program hopes to impact.

A mission statement should:

- Express the program’s purpose in a way that inspires support and ongoing commitment.
- Motivate those who are involved.
- Articulate in a way that is convincing and easy to grasp.
- Use proactive verbs to describe what will be done.
- Avoid jargon.
- Be short enough so that everyone involved can readily repeat it.

Create an identity. Give your program a name that is not only consistent with your overall mission, but that will be memorable, generate excitement and program participation.

Goals and Objectives. Once you are in agreement on a mission statement and your overall program identity, you will need to outline supporting goals and objectives necessary to realize your mission.

In setting your program goals, consider the following:

- The unique qualities of your faith community.
- The demographic and ethnic composition of your membership.
- The human and financial resources available for program implementation.

Establish clear goals and objectives. Shape them from the results gathered from your environmental assessment. Set both short- and long-term goals. Be practical and realistic by choosing obtainable goals and objectives. Remember that you are a diverse faith community, and that your goals and objectives should be culturally relevant.

Action Plan. After completing your objectives, identify the specific tasks required to accomplish each objective, the schedule for completing these tasks, and the person responsible.
MHT Food Justice Ministry

Mission Statement: MHT Food Justice is dedicated to uniting faith and nutrition, empowering MHT parishioners to create healthy bodies, minds and communities—one family at a time.

Background:
- The increased prevalence of overweight and obesity among children and adults in Santa Clara County is a serious public health issue.
- The Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD) received a CPPW grant to continue its efforts to reduce risk of overweight and obesity, and its consequent health conditions, among county residents. As part of the grant, SCCPHD solicited proposals focusing on organizational wellness in various community sectors, including faith-based.
- Dr. Marjorie Freedman, a professor of nutrition at San Jose State (SJSU) recalled a 3-year collaborative partnership between MHT and Congregation Shir Hadash. She believed a partnership between MHT and SJSU would result in a strong grant application.
- Dr. Freedman met with Father Eddie, Brother Jim and the MHT grants team to discuss submitting a grant as collaborative partners. MHT personnel agreed that this grant, if funded, could help bring needed resources to MHT to improve parishioners’ health.
- The grant proposal, submitted by SJSU (acting as fiscal agent) in collaboration with MHT, was awarded in July 2011.

Goals:
- To develop and pass a healthy food and beverage policy to result in a healthier food environment.
- To facilitate increased enrollment of eligible participants in CalFresh (Food Stamps)

Objectives:
- To assess the existing food environment at Most Holy Trinity Church.
- To engage stakeholders in a process by which they will understand the role that healthful foods and beverages and a supportive environment plays in reducing the risk of overweight and obesity, and to work with stakeholders to develop a culturally acceptable food and beverage policy.
- To support and expand existing MHT Health Ministry efforts.
- To provide nutrition education resources and programs aimed at increasing consumption of healthful foods and beverages, including:
  - A weekly bulletin column provided in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese
  - “Cooking Matters” classes for youth and adults
  - “Rethink your Drink” programming and materials
  - “Diabetes Conversation Maps” educational classes
- To increase participation in federally funded anti-hunger programs (e.g., CalFresh/SNAP)

Key Personnel:
- Marjorie Freedman, PhD Associate Professor, San Jose State (marjorie.freedman@sjsu.edu)
- Diane Fisher, Director, Jewish Community Relations Council (diane@jvalley.org)
- Angela Tirado, Project Coordinator, MHT
- Fr. Eddie Samaniego S.J. and Br. Jim Sanders, S.J., Senior Advisors, MHT
- Christina Rodriguez, Director, Health Ministry, MHT
4. Introduce Committee to the Faith Community

To gain member buy-in, endorsement and participation, it is vital that your committee be formally introduced to the members of your faith community.

**How to introduce your committee to the larger membership:**

- Ask your faith leader to conduct a formal commissioning service for the committee after a regular service.
- Have faith leadership announce the new ministry at the end of a service and conduct a question & answer session among membership and the committee.
- Place an announcement in the newsletter or bulletin about the committee’s formation and mission.
- Invite key leadership and members of various committees/ministries to a “meet and greet” where healthful foods and beverages are sampled.

5. Assess Opportunities and Barriers

The next step is to assess the potential opportunities to implement a food and beverage policy in various settings and barriers to implementation. The nutrition environment assessment (using the FBO-NEAT) will provide you with critical insights, and indicate which settings (e.g., meetings, church-sponsored events, fundraisers) and which constituent groups will be open to and supportive of policy implementation, as well as which groups might need more education as to the benefits of a food and beverage policy prior to their support. Ask the leaders of various committees/ministries (whom you have already met) to allow you to attend one of their committee’s scheduled meetings. Bring healthful foods and beverages to sample.

**When seeking to understand opportunities and barriers, consider the following:**

- What are the attitudes and level of knowledge about nutrition?
  ✓ To what extent is the nutrition content of foods and beverages a priority?
  ✓ Are decision makers and/or key leaders concerned about the healthfulness of foods and beverages they offer?
  ✓ Do decision makers and/or key leaders think it is feasible to improve the food environment? Why or why not?

- How feasible do you think it would be to implement a policy that set nutrition guidelines or standards?
  ✓ How easy/difficult do you think it would be to manage and enforce this policy?
  ✓ Who needs to be “on board” to implement this policy? Who would be some of the major supporters?
  ✓ Would cost and/or availability of healthful foods be a barrier to implementation?
  ✓ How would the policy address cultural food choices and preferences?
Although a few FBOs currently have food and beverage policies, worksites, schools, community-based organizations and some municipalities have passed food and beverage policies. Before drafting your own policy, it is helpful to review existing policies for ideas of what to include, appropriate language, and format (See Resources for some examples.) Overall, consider whether your policy is written to ensure that its potential health impact among members of your FBO will be maximized.

When drafting policy consider:

- Which nutrition standards will be included?
  ✓ In determining these standards, consider if you will set your own standards, or use preexisting standards. If using preexisting standards, consider whether they are appropriate for each group based on demographics including ethnicity.
- Is the policy focused on adding healthier options (such as encouraging fruits and vegetables be served at each event), restricting unhealthy options (foods high in added sugars), or both?
  ✓ The tone of your messaging is crucial in garnering support. Messaging that emphasizes what can be consumed rather than what cannot be consumed is more likely to be accepted.
- What policy language will work best in your FBO.
  ✓ Consider what is feasible based on your membership, willingness of key decision makers to pass the policy, and feasibility of making changes to the policy language at a later date. Remember, once a policy is in place, it may be difficult to go back later and make it more stringent.

Your committee can help members maintain an overall healthful diet by setting guidelines that require that meals and snacks sponsored by your faith community fall within the following parameters:

- Consume more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products.
- Include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.
- Include foods that are low in saturated fats, cholesterol, salt and added sugars.
- Include no- or low-calorie beverages, such as water and unsweetened tea.
- Consume fewer foods with sodium (salt), saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, and refined grains.

For more information see the Dietary Guidelines for Americans website. Visit ChooseMyPlate.gov for tips on how to put the Dietary Guidelines recommendations into practice.
**Other things to consider when drafting your policy:**

- What is the timeline for implementation?
- Will all standards be implemented at the same time or will they be phased in?
- Which groups, programs or settings will be required to implement the policy, and which ones, if any will be exempt? For example, will the policy be enforced if a group rents out space in your facility for a private event (e.g., wedding)? Will the policy be required in schools associated with your FBO?

7. **Present Policy to, and Obtain Feedback from Members**

Meeting with members of your FBO who have heretofore not been actively involved in the policy making process, and obtaining feedback from those who have already been included (via #5 above) will enable you to find out whether members find the draft policy appropriate, culturally acceptable, and feasible to implement. Comments provided will enable you to determine what changes, if any, need to be made. Although there are many ways to obtain feedback (e.g., personal and group interviews, phone surveys, and written surveys or questionnaires) it is strongly suggested that you meet with members face-to-face. This will allow you to answer specific questions that members may have, and also provide visibility to your ministry. Consider hosting a few informational sessions before or after worship services, and once again, ask to be invited to committee/ ministry meetings. Have healthful foods and beverages for members to sample at these events. Provide a written draft for members to review, pens and paper for comments, and follow-up contact information.

8. **Revise Policy if Necessary**

Based on feedback revised, revise policy as needed. Remember, the policy must ultimately be acceptable to the leadership and the larger membership in order to be implemented. Compromises may need to be made to achieve the goal of passing a food and beverage policy that aims to positively impact health outcomes of members of your FBO.

9. **Ask Leadership to Accept Policy**

Your hard work is almost finished! After providing your revised policy to your FBO leadership for review, ask to be put on the agenda of a leadership council meeting (or other governing board) so that a vote to accept the new policy can be taken. After vote taken and policy passed, celebrate your hard work.

10. **Publicize Policy to Members**

Now that your policy has been accepted, publish it in your bulletin, post it on your website, and provide copies to leadership. Create posters (in different languages) to hang in eating areas (see next page.)
Policy Posters

**MOST HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**Healthy Food Policy**

One or more of these healthy options will consistently be available:

**For Snacks**

During Meetings & Events

- Whole, fresh, in-season fruits.
- Cut-up, in-season fruits and vegetables.
- Nuts with low fat or no fat added (unless part of a special diet that requires nuts).
- Yogurt or cheese dips.
- Snack foods when refrigeration is unavailable.

**For Beverages**

During Meetings, Celebrations, & Gatherings

Water should always be served. In addition consider serving:

- 100% fruit and vegetable juices.
- Unsweetened coffee and tea.
- Diet soft drinks or unsweetened beverages.

As a minimum, at least 50% of all beverages served should be healthy. Serving a larger percentage of healthy beverages is encouraged.

**For Fundraising Events**

Selling Food and/or Beverages

At least 50% of beverages sold should be from the list of healthy beverages above; higher percentages are encouraged.

If sweet desserts are being sold, include at least one sweet dessert with no sugar and include smaller-sized and low-fat or low-calorie treats.

Proteins should make up 1/4 of the plate.
- Focus on lean meats, poultry, and fish.
- Beans and peas, and no refined white sugar.
- Whole grain breads, pastas, and cereals should make up about 1/4 of the plate.
- Aim to make at least half of the grains whole grains, so they provide more nutrients and fiber.

**MOST HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**Póliza de Comida Saludable**

Usa uno de estos opciones saludables será disponible consistentemente.

**Para Botanas Durante Juntas y Eventos:**

- Frutas y verduras crudas.
- En una taza frutas y verduras en temporada. Ofrece con el plato de comida para una gran mesa con ensalada de ensalada para cada persona.
- Frutas en vasos de leche disponible.

**Para Bebidas Durante Juntas, Fiestas, y Reuniones:**

Siempre se debe beber agua. También considera:

- Jugo de 100% frutas y verduras.
- Café y leche sin azúcar.
- Opciones de leche de soja blanca en lugar de leche de vaca.
- Leche y otras bebidas lácteas.

Como mínimo, 50% de las bebidas servidas serán saludables. Si el porcentaje es nada alto, mejor.

**Para Comidas Durante Juntas, Celebraciones y Reuniones:**

Una comida saludable contiene mucha frutas y verduras, y porciones más pequeñas de proteínas y grasas. Tratar de hacer que la mitad del plato sea de verduras y proteínas.

- Fresco, fresca, frutas y verduras para el desayuno, como ensaladas para parte de la comida.
- Bebidas lácteas de diferentes tamaños de frutas y verduras.
- Ofrece bebidas nutritivas de granos, leche y otras bebidas lácteas saludables.
- Incluye vegetales frescos, azucarados, y productos de cereales como mantequilla.

Se recomienda que las proteínas sean 1/4 del plato.

- Una ensalada baja en grasas y productos de huevo y pollo.
- Bebidas sin azúcar, lácteos con repostería de grases.

**Anécdotas:**

Algunos de los frutos de la tierra deben ser muy saludables, como ensaladas aliñadas con aceite de oliva.

**Comida de los pescado deben ser muy saludables, como ensaladas aliñadas con aceite de oliva.**
SELECTED RESOURCES

1. Examples of Faith-Based Organization Food Policies
   i. Bayview Baptist Church Food Policy (San Diego, CA)
   ii. First African Methodist Episcopal Church-Seattle Faith and Health Policies
   iii. Gateway Community Church Healthy Food Policy (San Diego, CA)
   iv. Immaculate Conception Church (Seattle) Nutrition Policy
   v. Mount Zion Baptist Church Nutrition Policy

2. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon - Interfaith Food and Farms Partnerships Sample Policies and Guidelines

3. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Faith-Based Resources: The Baltimore Food and Faith Project Good Food Toolkit

4. Live Healthy in Faith Georgia Guide to Promoting Nutrition and Physical Activity

5. US Department of Health & Human Services Let's Move! Faith & Communities Toolkit

6. The Eat Smart Move More NC Program and Tools and Faith Community

7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Communities Putting Prevention to Work Resource Center has an extensive list of resources.

8. The Bay Area Nutrition & Physical Activity Collaborative (Banpac) contains toolkits and links to food and beverage policies applicable to many different settings.

9. Food and Beverage Policies Specific to City/County Government
   i. California Center for Public Health Advocacy Model Language for City and County Food and Beverage Policy
   ii. Santa Clara County Nutrition Standards
   iii. Monterey County Health Department
   iv. Daly City Wellness Policy
   v. New York City Agency Food Standards

10. Food and Beverage Policies Specific to Community Based Organizations
    i. First 5 Grantee Food & Beverage Policy
    ii. Weigh of Life Healthy Beverage Policy
    iii. American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Recommended Nutrition Standards
    iv. American Cancer Society Meeting Well
11. Food and Beverage Policies Specific to Hospitals and Healthcare Settings
   i. Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Food and Beverage Policy
   ii. Contra Costa Health Plan Food & Beverage Policy

12. Food and Beverage Policies Specific to Children and Youth Settings
   i. Healthy and Active Before 5 Sample Healthy Food and Beverage Policy for Organizations

13. Food and Beverage Policies Specific to Adults Settings, Including Worksites
   i. Seattle & King County Healthy food choices for meetings
   ii. Network for a Healthy California Healthy Meeting Policies
   iii. Worksite Program California Fit Business Kit
   iv. Guidance for Healthier Eating at Work
   vi. University of Minnesota School of Public Health Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events
   vii. University of California, Berkeley Guide to Healthy Meetings and Events
   viii. University of South Carolina Healthy Meetings Guide
   ix. StayWell Healthy Meeting Guidelines
   x. New York Department of Health Guidelines for Healthy Meetings


15. Santa Clara County Public Health Department Implementing a Healthy Beverage Policy

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