

PHILADELPHIA NUTRITION STANDARDS: PROGRESS TOWARDS HEALTHIER MEALS

The City of Philadelphia adopted Nutrition Standards in 2014. The Philadelphia Nutrition Standards inform City-supported programs such as shelters, correctional facilities and youth-serving programs, which serve over 14.5 million meals/snacks to over 200,000 Philadelphians annually. This summary highlights the progress City departments have made since 2014 to implement the standards.



WHY NUTRITION STANDARDS MATTER

What we eat has a profound impact on our well-being. Healthy dietary patterns should be rich in fruits and vegetables and whole grains and low in sodium and added sugar. Healthy diets can improve our quality of life and prevent chronic diseases like high blood pressure and heart disease. All individuals deserve nutritious foods. Nutritious food should be accessible to everyone no matter where they live, learn, work, shop or play. The Philadelphia Nutrition Standards ensure that food provided or funded by the City is healthy, appealing, culturally appropriate and locally grown when possible.



FOOD CONTRACTING CHANGES

- Integrated Nutrition Standards into food bids and contracts
- Consolidated Citywide food bid categories from 14 to 5; extending the length of bids and advertising bids more widely
- Created a cooperative contract with US Foods, which allows departments to purchase higher quality products at better prices
- Tested Best Value contracts for food purchases, which allow characteristics like service delivery, quality and best-fit strategies to be considered in addition to price



MENU AND FOOD PREPARATION CHANGES

- Added healthier options to menus, including prepackaged entree salads, lower sodium snacks, nuts and seeds, salad bar and fruit-based desserts
- Replaced deli meat menu items with lower sodium alternatives like cheese pizza and yogurt
- Increased fresh fruits and vegetables instead of canned and switched from pre-made soups to homemade
- Limited service of fried foods

87% of sites reported serving two or more servings of fruits and vegetables at lunch and dinner meals*

92% of sites reported rinsing canned vegetables and beans before cooking. Rinsing vegetables and beans removes up to 40% of sodium.*

100% of sites reported serving water at all meals*

* Results are from surveys conducted with City department staff over 4 years from 2016 to 2019.



▶ A beverage dispenser in the staff dining room at the Curran Fromhold Correctional Facility offers fresh water flavored with fruit and herbs.



NUTRIENT CONTENT CHANGES

Based on nutrition analysis of available menus from 2013 to 2022, menu changes made by departments resulted in improvements in nutrient content:



calories



sodium



saturated fat



fiber



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- Partnered with Drexel Food Lab to research and develop products that are compliant with Nutrition Standards and connect with manufacturers to produce and market the products
- Developed several healthier food products such as: healthy deli salads, lower sodium hoagie roll and veggie soup base and a lower sodium 51% whole grain blended noodle

EXAMPLE: Amoroso's Baking Company reformulated their whole grain-rich hoagie roll served in area schools, which resulted in a reduction of 40%, or 140mg, of sodium in each of the 1.68 million rolls purchased annually, taking 1,294 lbs of salt out of school lunches.

"Over the past 4 years, we've made measurable changes to support the health of our corrections officers and our incarcerated population....I really thought that making the incarcerated person's menu healthier was going to increase costs, but in fact, it really hasn't."

—**Deborah Snyder**, Contract Administrator, PDP



GOOD FOOD VALUES

Good food is not just about nutrition. It prioritizes food that is sustainably-produced, locally-oriented and produced fairly.

From 2017 to 2018, the Health Department conducted a baseline good food purchasing assessment with City departments in partnership with the Center for Good Food Purchasing. Findings showed that while departments met the baseline standard for healthy, there are opportunities to improve City food purchasing related to the other values.

FINDINGS:

19% of food is purchased from local sources

3% of purchases are from unionized companies

2% of food purchased from sustainable sources

2% of purchases meets animal welfare criteria

Up to 65% of purchased food cannot be traced back to the farm

NEXT STEPS

- Convene City department leadership and staff to support ongoing Standards implementation and address opportunities to continue to improve City food purchasing
- Align with Parks and Recreation's Urban Agriculture Plan recommendations related to nutrition, cultural relevance and food procurement
- Share progress updates annually
- Revise Nutrition Standards every 5 years