

m-NEAT ACTION PLAN TOOLKIT: VENDING OPERATIONS

BACKGROUND:

Healthy vending can play an important part in encouraging healthier food choices on your installation. Vending machines are a popular vehicle for convenient snack foods and beverages for many people. This makes for an excellent opportunity to help fuel our warfighters with optimal performance-based foods and beverages. However, vending machines are often a source of less-than-healthy products. Many options are high in calories, fat, and added sugars, and are low in nutrients. Examples are candy, soft drinks, chips, cookies, and cakes. Offering nutrient dense foods, such as dried fruit or yogurt, can help individuals make better choices.

NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR VENDING

The new Health Care Reform Law requires chain vending machine operators to clearly disclose calorie amounts for their vending items.¹ Various government agencies and some vending companies have developed nutritional guidelines to evaluate foods and beverages related to vending operations for a variety of nutrients. The m-NEAT Healthy Option Criteria are based on a number of these guidelines:^{2, 3, 4}

Nutrient	m-NEAT Healthy Option Criteria
Total Fat	≤35% calories per serving (excludes nuts and seeds without added fats or oils)
Trans Fat	≤0.5 grams per serving (excludes reduced-fat cheese)
Sugar ≤35%	≤35% by weight of total sugars (excludes fruits, vegetables, milk)
Sodium	≤230 mg per serving (snack items) and ≤480 mg per serving (meal items)
Calories	≤200 calories per package (snack items) or ≤500 calories or less (entree meal)

Table 1: FIT PICK™ NUTRITION GUIDELINES

OPTION/DESIGNATION: FIT PICK™ OPTION 1	35-10-35	FIT PICK™ OPTION 2—BASED ON THE ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION
INTENDED AUDIENCE	GENERAL POPULATION/SCHOOLS THAT DESIRE A MORE LIBERAL CRITERIA	SCHOOLS/YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS THAT WANT A CRITERIA FOR SODIUM, CALORIES, PORTION SIZE AND/OR BEVERAGE STANDARDS
SNACK CRITERIA	YES	YES
FAT	NO MORE THAN 35% OF TOTAL CALORIES (EXCLUDES NUTS, NUT BUTTERS, SEEDS)	NO MORE THAN 35% OF TOTAL CALORIES (EXCLUDES NUTS, NUT BUTTERS, SEEDS)
SATURATED FAT	NO MORE THAN 10% OF TOTAL CALORIES	NO MORE THAN 10% OF TOTAL CALORIES OR LESS THAN 1 GRAM
TRANS FATS	NO GUIDELINE	ZERO TRANS FATS
SUGAR	NO MORE THAN 35% OF TOTAL PRODUCT WEIGHT	NO MORE THAN 35% OF TOTAL CALORIES
SODIUM	NO GUIDELINE	NO MORE THAN 230 MG (EXCLUDES LOW OR NON-FAT DAIRY PRODUCTS)
BEVERAGE	NO GUIDELINES BUT OPTION 2 GUIDELINES COULD BE ADOPTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH OPTION 1	<p>WATER</p> <p>MILK: FAT- FREE MILK OR LOW-FAT REGULAR/ FLAVORED MILK WITH UP TO 150 CAL/8 OZ</p> <p>JUICE: 100% JUICE WITH NO ADDED SWEETENERS; UP TO 120 CAL/8 OZ & MINIMUM 10 % RDV FOR 3 OR MORE VITAMINS AND MINERALS</p>

FIT PICK™ Healthy Vending Option

FIT PICK™ is a national program developed by the National Automatic Merchandising Association which has also been adopted by Exchange Services world-wide. FIT PICK™ helps consumers by providing healthier items that are labeled according to a set of nutritional criteria based on recommendations of the [American Heart Association](http://www.heart.org) (www.heart.org), [USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans](http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/) (<http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>), and [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](http://www.healthiergeneration.org/) (<http://www.healthiergeneration.org/>). There are two levels or options regarding nutrition guidelines: Option 1 and Option 2. The former is more liberal, while the latter includes additional guidelines for sodium, calories, portion size, and/or beverage standards and serves as a benchmark in the m-NEAT evaluation tool. Table 1: FIT PICK™ Nutrition Guidelines). A corresponding Fit Pick™ 35-10-35 Snack List is available (www.fitpick.org) However, this list only identifies items that meet Option 1 criteria. FIT PICK™ does not currently have a snack list based on Option 2 criteria. The Center of Disease Control (in collaboration with the Government Service Administration and Department of Health and Human Services) is currently developing a tool to help vendors meet a stricter set of federal nutrition guidelines^{2,3}. In the meantime, you might find the Option 1 list as a good starting tool.

GETTING STARTED

A Sample m-NEAT Healthy Vending Action Plan Checklist (Attachment 1) is provided to help you begin. Garnering the most support for healthy vending on your installation will require collaboration with others, especially your Installation Commander and those that oversee all vending contracts on the base. Items on the action plan can be developed and assigned to key stakeholders and progress monitored as a part of your Installation Health Promotion Working Group meetings.

Define and develop a coalition of key stakeholders. The first step is to develop a team of key stakeholders to include, most importantly, the Installation's Exchange Services Business Manager (SBM). The majority of vending contracts are usually managed by SBM. However, the National Association of Blind Merchants (<http://www.blindmerchants.org>) may also manage some percentage of vending machines on your installation. Other key team members may include the Health Promotion Manager, Human Resources Manager, Facilities Manager, Installation Food Service Officer, Installation Fitness Director, dietitian, Public Health Officer, and hospital Food Service Director. Include consumers to ensure their favorite products are

maintained. Determine if there are particular individuals or groups that oppose changes in vending as part of your discussion/team.

Meet with your SBM and the installation's Contract Office to determine status of existing vending contracts. Determine if FIT PICK™ (or other healthy vending program) is in place and if so, the existing nutrition criteria and percentage of healthy vending items are currently required/offered. It may be possible to work with the existing vendor to add new product, add dedicated healthy vending machines, or work with the Exchange to identify locations that could be converted to healthy machines when contracts end.

Increasing Percentage of Healthy Items While Ensuring Customer Satisfaction and Profitability. One of the most common challenges to implementing healthy vending is a perception by vendors that the items will not sell and will hurt profits.⁵ This is understandable. However, research suggests otherwise. Although there may be an initial drop in sales when healthy items in a vending machine go over 25%, vendors have seen an increase in sales over time. Multiple studies have shown consumer acceptance and ability to increase the percentage of healthy items^{6, 7} by up to 75% of choices⁸ without negatively affecting sales. Currently, the Exchange requires that 15% of items in traditional machines meet FIT PICK™ Option 1 criteria. Military training sites are required to carry 50% FIT PICK™ products. Drastic changes may decrease consumer acceptance. Consider ways to gradually increase the percentage of healthy items over time. **In order to optimize consumer purchases and product sales of healthy vending items:**

*Group healthy products together for easier identification. The industry recommends aligning all the healthy items on the right hand side. Use prime spots for items that you are trying to introduce.

*Include as many different healthy products as possible in each machine, i.e. different varieties of chips, cookies, dried fruit, trail mix, granola bars, etc. Experience shows that two or three spirals filled with the same or similar products will not do as well as a variety of different products.

*Avoid stocking the healthy version of a product in the same machine as the traditional version of the same product. Consumers tend to choose the traditional version when both are available.

*Ask if the Exchange can coordinate with its vendor representatives to conduct product samplings as part of their promotional offers.

*Include comment cards on the side of the machine.

Machine Placement. Meet with your SBM and Installation Food Service Officer to determine the best placement for machines. Lessons learned from installations who have paved the way are that squadron common rooms, PAX terminals, education buildings, and libraries are prime locations for vending machines. Additional locations to consider are the Temporary Lodging Facility (TLF), bowling alley, and MTF for those without midnight meals, etc. The Installation Medical Treatment Facility or Fitness Center serve as excellent locations to consider implementing dedicated healthful machines in addition to areas where individuals are working 2nd or 3rd shifts but do not have access to healthful meals.

Pricing Strategies. One vending strategy to improve consumer selection of healthier items is to lower the cost of healthier items, increase the price of less healthy items, or a combination of both. A number of studies show that this strategy is effective and that vending profits are not negatively affected.^{5,9} Current DoD policy, however, may limit the ability to adjust pricing to the degree necessary to observe a significant effect on consumer purchase behavior. Alternately, you might note whether the healthier snacks are priced *higher* than traditional versions of snack. Discuss possible pricing strategies with your SBM. Remember to include favorites which can be at a lower cost, such as graham crackers.

Promoting Healthy Vending. Suboptimal marketing may cause an initial decrease in vending revenue. Work with your SBM to help promote your healthy vending program:

- *Implement signage, promote on payroll stuffer, and/or publish a series of articles in newsletters.

- *Conduct a product sampling event

- *Ask leaders to announce the healthy vending program at staff meetings or commanders calls

Provide baskets of sample healthy vending products for break rooms or at staff meetings

ATTACHMENT 1: Sample m-NEAT Healthy Vending Action Plan Checklist

This sample checklist is intended to help you get started and can also be included in your Installation Health Promotion Working Group (HPWG) meeting minutes. Suggested Action Items and Points of Contact can be modified as needed according to the needs of the installation and resources available. The FIT PICK™ Implementation Guide (FPIG at www.fitpick.org) also contains valuable guidance and tools.

Suggested Action Items	Suggested Point of Contact	Status/Considerations	Expected Completion Date
Define and Develop a List of Key Stakeholders	Installation HPWG Officer		
Assess Current Vending Status See FPIG pp. 13-18: "Step by Step Guide" Contact Exchange Business Manager Contact Installation Contract Office re: Additional Vending Contracts i.e. National Association of Blind Merchants	Installation HPWG Officer	Address the following: a. Current m-NEAT Vending Score/ Areas of Improvement b. Current Healthy Vending Contract/% Required Healthy Items Option 1 vs. Option 2 Requirements, Current Contract Expiration Date c. SBM/Vendor Concerns	
Conduct Healthy Vending Survey See Sample Worksite Vending Survey (Attachment 2)	Installation HPWG Officer	Consider using an electronic survey tool or conducting a focus group	
Conduct Taste Test IAW Current Vending Contract Agreement See FPIG pg. 47		Some vending operators may be reluctant to participate in sampling since this is not that common in the industry. The local Exchange may be able to coordinate and assist IAW the contract agreement.	
Develop Grand Launch Establish new contract or modify IAW AAFES/contracting requirements See FPIG Launch Worksheet & Checklist pg. 61 Launch Items to include: Machine Stickers	Installation HPWG Officer Oversight Exchange Service SBM w/Installation HPWG Officer Exchange Service	Choose a few pilot sites first before full implementation to assess compliance with standards, acceptance, and sales.	

Plan-o-grams	SBM Vendor		
Machine Set-Up	Exchange Service SBM/Vendor		
Training to route drivers	Exchange Service SBM/Vendor		
Press Release- See FPIG for Sample Press Release Appendix I pg. 51	Installation HPWG Officer		
Radio PSA, See FPIG Sample PSA Script, pg. 53	Installation HPWG Officer		
Monitoring See Sample Comment Card FPIG pg. 59	Exchange Service SBM/Vendor	Ensure healthy items are stocked and priced appropriately.	
Marketing strategies See Sample Articles, FPIG pp. 54-55	IHPWG/Exchange SBM		
Develop ongoing education campaign	IHPWG Officer		
Collect, Track & Report Evaluation Measures 1. m-NEAT Vending Operations scores 2. Customer Satisfaction (See Sample Comment Card, FPIG, pg. 59) 3. Request Vendor Sales Reports comparing healthy vs. traditional products (if available)	IHPWG Officer/Exchange SBM	Document lessons learned. Note: It is not a requirement for vendors to share their customer satisfaction data or sales reports. It might help to focus on developing a good relationship with your SBM and vendor reps first and foremost.	

ATTACHMENT 2: Worksite Vending Survey

1. Please tell us about yourself by indicating your rank/grade.

- E1-E4 E5-6 E7-E9 01-03 04-06 07 & Above
- Gov't Civil Service: Indicate Grade: ____ Gov't Contractor
- Family Member/Retired Other: _____

2. How many times per week do you buy snack foods from the vending machine on your military installation while at work? (check from list)

- Less than once per week
- 1-2 times per week
- 3-4 times per week
- 5-6 times per week
- 7 or more times per week

If you use the vending machine less than once per week, skip to question 14.

Please answer the questions below if you use the vending machines 1 or more times per week.

When making a choice at a vending machine, how important is:

(MARK ONE BOX FOR EACH ITEM)

		Not at all important		Somewhat important		Very important
3	Trying a snack I've never had before:					
4	Snack taste:					
5	Snack price:					
6	Number of calories in a snack:					
7	Amount of fat in a snack:					
8	Amount of carbohydrates in a snack:					
9	How "healthy" a snack is:					
10	Watching my weight:					
11	Value for my					

	money:					
12	Buying my "usual" snack:					
13	How hungry I am:					

14. Where do you usually get your food for work? (CHECK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY)

- bring from home
- buy from nearby store and eat at work
- eat away from work
- buy from worksite vending machines
- don't eat anything at work

15. I would like healthy options in the snack food vending machine at work and on my military installation.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

16. If there were a variety of healthy snack food choices, I would use the snack food vending machine more often than I currently do.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

17. On average, how much do you spend per week on the snack food vending machine?

- \$0-\$2.00
- \$2.00-\$4.00
- \$4.00-\$6.00
- More than \$6.00 per week

SURVEY COMPLETE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSES!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & REFERENCES

FIT PICK™ Developed by the National Automated Merchandising Association (NAMA), Fit Pick™ helps consumers locate vending machine choices that support a healthy lifestyle. It is a simple, ready-to-use system of vending machine stickers that identify vended products which meet a standardized set of nutrition guidelines. Its comprehensive implementation toolkit includes an implementation guide, healthy product list, and marketing tools (stickers, clings, posters). www.fitpick.org.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health and Sustainable Food Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations. <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/guidelines/food-service-guidelines.htm>.

National Automated Merchandising Association (NAMA). NAMA is the national trade association of the food and refreshment vending, coffee service and foodservice management industries including on-site, commissary, catering and mobile. Its membership is comprised of service companies, equipment manufacturers and suppliers of products and services to operating service companies. The basic mission of the association is to collectively advance and promote the automatic merchandising and coffee service industries. <http://www.vending.org>.

Alliance for a Healthier Generation is a partnership between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation as a response to the growing rate of childhood obesity. www.healthiergeneration.org

¹ New Menu and Vending Machines Labeling Requirements. US Food and Drug Administration. <http://www.fda.gov/food/labelingnutrition/ucm217762.htm>. Accessed 1/19/2013.

² HHS/GSA Healthy and Sustainable Food Guidelines (Federal Concessions and Vending Operations): http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/Guidelines_for_Federal_Concessions_and_Vending_Operations.pdf

³ Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations: Q & A for HHS Employees: <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/pdf/QA-foro-Employees.pdf>.

⁴ FIT PICK™ Toolkit: www.fitpick.org.

⁵ Healthy Vending Toolkit: Guide for Federal Healthy Vending Options. Centers for Disease Control/Dept. of Health & Human Services/Government Service Administration.

⁶ Gorton D., Carter J., Cvjetan B.; Ni Mhurchu C. Healthier Vending Machines in Workplaces: Both Possible and Effective. *N A Med J.* 2010 Mar 19; 123 (1311): 43-52.

⁷ French S.A., Jeffery R.W., Story M., Breitlow K.K., Baxter J.S., Hannan P., Snyder M.P. Pricing and Promotion Effects on Low-Fat Vending Snack Purchases: the CHIPS Study.

⁸ Kimmons J., Wood M., Villarante, J.C., Lederer A. Adopting Healthy and Sustainable Food Service Guidelines: Emerging Evidence from Implementation at the United States Federal Government, New York City, Los Angeles County, and Kaiser Permanente. *American Society for Nutrition. Adv. Nutr.* 3: 746-748, 2012; doi:10.3945/1n.112.002642.

⁹ French S.A., Hannan, P.J., Harnack L.J., Mitchell N.R., Toomey T.L., Gerlach A. J. *Occup Environ Med* 2010 Jan;52 Suppl 1:S29-33.