KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR HEALTHY FOOD VENUE SERVICES

One of the incredibly important but often overlooked functions of hospitals is their role in providing healthy food options for their patients, employees, and visitors. Hospitals are the pinnacle of health care for most communities and therefore influence individual behaviors of patients, staff, families, and visitors who rely on hospital food venues (cafeterias, vending machines, snack bars) to provide healthy and affordable food options. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many hospitals to re-evaluate how they are meeting the nutritional needs of their community and how they are meeting the financial needs for the hospital’s continued operations.

The following flowchart offers key considerations for hospital food service providers along with quick resources to guide hospital management to provide healthy, accessible meals in a safe and sustainable manner.

ENSURE MISSION ALIGNMENT

Provide affordable meals that promote the health of patients, visitors and employees and secure senior leadership support for the mission

CDC: Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities
CDC: Creating Healthier Hospital Food, Beverage and Physical Activity Environments

COST CONSIDERATIONS

- Food sourcing (vendors, local suppliers)
- Consumer pricing
- Marketing, messaging promotion and positioning
- Portion size

ACCESSIBILITY & AVAILABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Food availability and seasonality
- Infection control
- Nutritional labeling
- Pre-packaged/grab-n-go

ACCOUNTABILITY & ENGAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Staff input and engagement
- Testing and evaluation
- Implementation

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Geographical and cultural needs
- Centralized and decentralized decision making
- Staff size, safety and organization

QUICK RESOURCES

Partnering with Food Service to Reduce Sodium: A Toolkit for Public Health Practitioners
COVID-19 Guidance for Food Workers & Food Establishments
Improving the Design of Nutrition Labels to Promote Healthier Food Choices and Reasonable Portion Sizes

CDC: Step-By-Step Guide to Using the Healthy Hospitals Food, Beverage and Physical Activity Environment Scans
Smart Food Choices: How to Implement Food Service Guidelines in Public Facilities
Whole System Approaches to Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Healthcare Workers: A Systematic Review

Creating Healthy Food and Eating Environments: Policy and Environmental Approaches
Dynamics of Implementation and Maintenance of Organizational Health Interventions
Hospital-based Strategies for Creating a Culture of Health