

Environmentally Preferred Sourcing Program

EPS Toolkit: Food services

Enhancing your food services to include organic or other environmentally friendly alternatives can have many benefits, including:

- Enhancing the health and well-being of patients, staff and visitors
- Improving nutrition
- Modeling a healthy eating environment
- Decreasing waste disposal costs
- Reducing antibiotic resistance
- Supporting the local community and improving public relations

What you can do

Several suggestions follow, and are also in the buying local, food service ware and composting food waste sections.

Establish an overarching food policy

You may want to begin sustainability work in your facility by developing a broad, integrated food policy to guide your future efforts. Or, you may elect to build excitement and momentum one step at a time and tackle a broader food policy after some small successes.

Follow these steps to create a policy:

1. Determine who needs to participate. Creating and implementing a policy will require a multidisciplinary team, including food and nutrition services, purchasing, administration, nursing and clinicians. Other potential members include public affairs, ethics and quality improvement.
2. Clarify the purpose and scope of developing the policy. Is it just about the food provided to patients? Patients and staff? The entire facility or network? Is part of the purpose to provide a broader statement of support for local food systems?

3. Do an inventory of:

- The types of food services (vending machines, cafeteria, patient meals) in your facility
- Internal and external services available to help implement the policy

4. Ensure that the policy reflects your unique needs, can realistically be met and takes into consideration your geographic area.

5. Include statements about providing nutritionally improved food in your policy. You may want to include provisions that would support local or organic purchasing, the purchase of milk produced without the use of synthetic hormones (such as recombinant bovine growth hormone) and the purchase of meat and poultry raised without nontherapeutic antibiotics or hormones.

Sample language: [Hospital] will work to purchase meat, poultry, and dairy products produced with reduced amounts of antibiotics.

Health Care Without Harm developed a healthy food in health care pledge, which would provide a good basis for this work.

Engage the Vizient authorized distributor to help

Communicate with your authorized distributor and encourage that company to source local, organic foods on your behalf. Identify the products that can best achieve your goals.

Ask your authorized distributor to build these requirements into its procurement requests using language such as:

It shall be the responsibility of the contractor to provide a variety of quality prepared foods. The contractor shall meet industry standards of quality and nutrition and comply with the U.S. Dietary Guidelines (i.e., offer foods low in total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium and sugar). In

addition, where feasible, foods, which represent a more sustainable life cycle, will be offered — such as organic fruits and vegetables and/or shade-grown coffee. The contractor shall use only vegetable oils low in saturated fats and in minimal amounts in their recipes, and in deep frying, pan frying, grill frying and baking.

In addition, develop seasonal menus to support local and fresh produce that are tailored to screen out highly processed foods.

Include energy conservation guidelines

Use contract language that ensures food vendors are conscious of their energy use. Require Energy Star equipment, including vending machines. Sample language:

-The contractor shall only use equipment that earns the Energy Star certification. The contractor shall be responsible for securing lights and cafeteria equipment (including kitchen) during periods of nonactive operations that are not essential for safety, security or sanitation. The contractor shall be liable for the estimated costs of utilities resulting from leaving such nonessential equipment and lights in operation during periods of nonactive operations and for the additional estimated cost of utilities from failure to perform preventive maintenance and repair requirements on all equipment to maintain Energy Star standards.

Become a fast-food-free zone

Fast food often has little nutritional value, is high in fat, sugar, salt and calories, and does not promote a healthy lifestyle. Although these items may provide revenue for your facility and comfort food for patients and staff, their inclusion in a typical menu sends a strong message in contradiction to good eating habits.

You will need to:

- Review the food service operations within your facilities
- Develop healthy eating criteria you would like them to meet
- Advise the hospital administration, staff and customers of your desire to provide more healthy food choices and provide them with your criteria
- Educate them on the benefits of being an advocate of good health and setting an example for the community by the foods that are served to the patients and the public

- Replace menu items not meeting your criteria with food selections that are synonymous with high quality, nutritious food

Put healthy choices in your vending machines

Vending machines in hospitals provide a useful service as staff and visitors rely on them for snacks when the cafeteria is not open or they have no time for a full meal. Ensure that at least some of the foods offered are consistent with dietary recommendations for healthy snacking.

Steps to take:

1. Establish guidelines or a policy for healthy items in your vending machines. You could use the guidelines developed by The Brand Name Food List, which provides nutrition ratings for packaged foods and beverages. The policy could include statements such as no trans-fat, low in processed sugars and fats, no artificial ingredients and no preservatives. It could also outline food packaging standards and the energy efficiency of vending machines.
2. Decide how many healthy items you would like. For many organizations, 100 percent healthy is too high. Decide what makes sense for you.
3. Meet with the vending company to discuss your new guidelines and policy, as well as the food items they have that could meet these guidelines. Options could include whole fruit, low fat and low sugar snacks and water or juice beverages.
4. Talk to your employees about the initiative by sending out memos, putting articles on your website and in your newsletters, and displaying posters by vending machines.
5. Monitor the restock of your machines to ensure they abide by the established standards over time.

What is recombinant bovine growth hormone?

Recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH, also known as rBST) is given to dairy cows to increase milk production for longer periods of time. There is much controversy surrounding the safety of rBGH for both cows and humans. The use of this hormone is not allowed in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and all 25 nations of the European Union.

Health care systems can purchase non-rBGH milk from their suppliers. There are two categories of non-rBGH milk: organic and nonorganic. Organic milk, in addition to being rBGH-free, also prohibits the use of pesticides in feed and antibiotic use in cows. Nonorganic rBGH-free milk allows

the use of pesticides and antibiotics, and can be similarly priced to conventional milk. Ask suppliers for availability and verification methods for rBGH-free dairy products.

Why buy meat and poultry raised without nontherapeutic antibiotics?

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria are an increasing concern, and the scientific consensus is that antibiotic overuse in food animals contributes to resistance transmitted to humans. Approximately 70 percent of all antibiotics are given to animals for nontherapeutic purposes.

You can express a preference for buying meats produced without antibiotic feed additives given to animals in the absence of diagnosed disease. Chicken produced without the use of medically important antibiotics is widely available at no cost premium. Pork is also available to a lesser extent.

Buying and supporting local foods

Benefits

- Reduces the use of plastic packaging and chemical preservatives required for transporting food long distances
- Decreases fuel consumption and air and water pollution associated with long-distance transport
- Builds relationships with your community

What you can do

Buy from local producers

Set goals and explore new relationships designed to increase the purchase of locally produced foods. Steps to take include:

1. Ask what locally produced foods your authorized distributor currently provides. Include products such as breads, cheeses, seafoods and meats in addition to produce.
2. Express a preference for purchasing fresh, locally grown and sustainable food from your authorized distributor and ask it to source these options. You may wish to create a policy or statement that includes language such as:
“We will work to maximize locally sourced foods, free of unnecessary hormones, pesticides, antibiotics and protective of biodiversity.”
“We will work with our authorized distributors to promote sustainable food transportation systems and will source, when appropriate, local foods and those, which minimize inherent transportation impacts.”
3. Investigate the percentage of foods that you can purchase outside the prime vendor relationship with the authorized distributor.

4. Renegotiate with the authorized distributor, as appropriate, to meet your new goals.
5. Post a notice on various electronic mailing lists requesting information on local food suppliers, or contact the local U.S. Department of Agriculture office or a local agriculture or extension agent to find local food suppliers.
6. Contact small farm associations, direct farm marketing associations or community supported agriculture networks for information about local foods.
7. Cultivate a relationship with local producers and communicate your needs. Start small by buying only a few products so you can develop a relationship.
8. Pre-order your produce before the growing season, providing security for both you and the grower.

Host a farmers' market on hospital grounds

On-site farmers' markets and farm stands provide fresh produce to staff, visitors and patients. Farmers' markets also generate goodwill in a community, support local growers and create new community partnerships. Steps to take include:

1. Check with your local government to ensure this is possible.
2. Approach your local farming community about the market, contact the state farmers' market association or work with a community group who would like to organize the market.
3. Designate a particular area as suitable. This will depend on whether the market will be seasonal or year-round.
4. Promote the market by posting times, dates and locations on your website, in your newsletters and on posters in your facility.

5. Use the market as a publicity campaign for how you are supporting your local community.
6. Contribute resources through environmental services for set up, tear down and clean up.

Model local, nutritious food at conferences, meetings and workshops

Work with your local conference center or hotel and implement contract language that would require local food at all or part of your event. If you provide a holiday or seasonal meal for your staff, consider an all-local or organic celebration. The Society for Nutrition Education has good guidelines to increase the use of local foods at meetings. Ensure that you do the following:

- State that you are interested in serving local foods
- Ask whether they purchase food from vendors that supply locally produced food; if not, ask if they consider using recommended local vendors
- Sign a contract that includes the requirement for local food
- Identify a member of your organization who can help make local contacts

Local foods

The definition of "local" or "regional" is flexible and varies. A local business with specific retail and production focuses, such as cheese, may take a larger view of what is local, while a local farm may see the area within a day's driving as local. Buying local is really about trying to support local community and to reduce food miles — in the U.S. the typical food item travels 1,500 to 2,400 miles from farm to plate.

Organic certification generally involves a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging and shipping of food that include:

- Avoiding most synthetic chemical inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives etc.), genetically modified organisms and irradiation
- Using farmland that has been free from chemicals for a number of years
- Maintaining strict physical separation of organic from noncertified products
- Undergoing periodic on-site inspections

Biodegradable and recyclable dinner and flatware

What you can do

Choose reusable food service ware

Reusable food service ware requires far fewer material resources, uses much less energy, and generates less solid waste than similar disposable products, both in its production and use. Additional costs for cleaning are often offset by savings in purchasing, inventory management and environmental services (from reduced waste management). Consider doing the following:

- If you use a significant amount of disposables, start with a pilot project, just in your cafeteria for full meals for example – meaning only one size of plate would be purchased initially.
- Avoid items made from plastics containing polystyrene, polyvinyl, polyethylene terephthalate (PET) or polycarbonate. Instead, choose lead-free ceramic ware or products made from glass, stainless steel, bio-based materials, polyethylene or polypropylene.
- To maximize the environmental benefits of reusable food service ware use energy and water efficient appliances and donate old reusables to a local charity to eliminate disposal costs.

Choose bio-based food service ware that is certified compostable

In areas where reusables are not an option, such as take-out, use certified compostable bio-based food service ware to increase food waste diversion. While bio-based wares can be more expensive than other disposables, you can recover the cost by reducing the use of disposables or reducing waste hauling fees by diverting these products and associated food waste to composting sites. Sample contract language:

-To the greatest extent feasible, all disposable products provided by the contractor shall be from starch- based, bio-based material, which can be composted where feasible. All other disposable products, where feasible, shall be from 100 percent recyclable material that can be composted. The contractor shall participate in a comprehensive integrated recycling program. The quantities of each type of recycled material shall be reported in writing monthly.

Choose napkins made from unbleached, recycled paper

You can choose napkins made from up to 100 percent recycled paper. Ensure they are natural or unbleached so that they may be composted as well.

Bio-based products are made in whole or in part from renewable materials such as corn, potatoes, sugar cane waste, perennial grasses and paper. These products have an additional environmental advantage if they are composted.

Composting and reducing food waste

Food and food waste can comprise up to 20 percent of the solid waste volume in your facility. Composting provides many benefits, including:

- Reducing waste volume
- Providing cost savings
- Increasing soil micronutrients, which can lower costs in your grounds department by reducing their need to buy mulch, fertilizer and pesticides
- Avoiding sludge issues at the wastewater treatment plant and added costs of water discharges, if you are using an industrial food disposal system

What you can do

Compost handling depends on a number of factors, including what you choose to compost, local regulations, funding and available labor. Space limitations will also dictate what type of composting method you can adopt.

Food waste can be picked up by local haulers and sent to off-site composting facilities or used as animal feed; or composting can be done on-site. The former is often cheaper in the short-term, but on-site composting, despite higher start-up costs, is usually cheaper in the long run. However, if there are compost programs available in your community, using their services may be more economical than developing your own program.

Steps to take include the following:

1. Determine the quantity and type of food waste you could compost.
2. Investigate how much you currently pay to manage this food waste.
3. Compare the short and long-term costs and the feasibility of each composting alternative.
4. Consider other alternatives for food waste disposal including a local food bank or local farms that accept food waste as feed for stock.
5. Consider starting with a pilot project in one kitchen or one facility rather than across your network.
6. Discuss the collection process with your operations and facilities managers.

7. Check with local and regional governments, and nonprofit organizations to see what assistance may be offered.
8. Speak to your infection control committee. Its concerns can be addressed with a carefully planned program and should not be a barrier to implementation. The Environmental Protection Agency wrote a report, "Analysis of Composting as an Environmental Remediation Technology," that provides information on the use of compost for managing hazardous waste streams and for remediation of contaminated soil.
9. Choose appropriate sized bins for each area — sturdy with tight-fitting lids and wheels, making them easy to load and unload.
10. Label the bins and place them in the food preparation and clean-up areas. To reduce contamination, place a regular garbage can next to the waste food collection bin.
11. Introduce your composting program with a training session and use signs, announcements and supervisor role models to lead the way. If you are accepting post-consumer waste, the public will also need to be brought on board.
12. Do a post-implementation audit to see how much waste you kept out of the landfill and the amount of money you saved.

What can be composted?

All kinds of organic waste can be diverted from the landfill including:

- Tree, shrub, leaves and grass prunings
- Nonmeat food scraps including fruits, vegetables, bread and cereals
- Napkins, paper towels, cardboard, post-it notes and dryer lint

Things you should never compost include:

- Weeds, diseased plants, treated wood and other hazardous materials
- Plastic, glass and metal
- Oils, meat and bones
- Cat, dog and human waste

How do you compost?

There are many different composting methods, some more adaptable to large facilities. Examples include:

- Grass cycling — leaving grass clippings on the lawn
- Passive piles — piles left alone can take up to a year to create compost
- Active piles — balance the right proportions of carbon materials (leaves) and nitrogen materials (food waste); turned regularly and kept moist
- Aerated piles — active piles that use air circulation to work faster

- In-vessel — systems that compost anywhere from a few pounds to over 60 tons a day. Materials are placed in the container and mixed, shredded and aerated. This is a good method when space is limited.
- Vermicomposting — uses worms and micro-organisms to do the work of composting

The Vizient Environmentally Preferred Sourcing (EPS) Program offers members supply and service cost savings through more than 36,000 supplier agreements. EPS suppliers have verified EPS attributes and provide products that can support members' sustainability objectives. This toolkit is a resource to help members create or enhance their sustainability programs.

As the nation's largest member-driven health care performance improvement company, Vizient provides network-powered insights in the critical areas of clinical, operational, and supply chain performance and empowers members to deliver exceptional, cost-effective care.



To learn more, contact us at eps@vizientinc.com.