

HEALTHY CHOICES AT OFFICIAL EVENTS

Introduction

The foods we choose to eat are one of the major determinants of our health and well-being. Worksites that offer nutritious food choices help employees by providing opportunities to make healthy choices. Access to nutritious food also helps to create a healthier workforce by supporting individuals who are trying to eat better or follow a diet plan.

The Arkansas Department of Health acknowledges that healthy eating can have an impact on its employees' health, and that the provision of healthy foods and beverages contributes to better health for all. Also, the Arkansas Department of Health must serve as a model of desired behavior to improve the health of Arkansans to prevent chronic disease and attain optimum health. This policy focuses on ways to accommodate diverse, healthy lifestyles and behaviors in the workplace in order to improve workplace performance and well-being. **(See Tips for Implementing the Food and Beverage Guidelines in the Appendices of this Volume.)**

See Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events at http://www.ahc.umn.edu/ahs_content/colleges/sph/sph_news/Nutrition.pdf

Policy:

The Arkansas Department of Health is committed to and ensures the following:

1. **A healthy environment** for its employees' health and those worked with and served in the community.
2. **At any Arkansas Department of Health function** (meeting, reception, conference, meal, break, training or other similar event) at least 50% of the food and beverage items served will be healthy choices. This includes events sponsored by the Agency, even if the food and beverages are not paid for by Agency funds. Although this policy does not cover unofficial occasions not funded by the Agency, such as potlucks, it is recommended that healthy choices be offered at these events also.
3. **Serve fruits and/or vegetables every time food is offered.** Examples include fresh fruit and salads; fresh and cooked vegetables
4. **Offer a variety of grains—especially whole-grain foods.** Examples include whole-grain breads, pasta, and cereals; and muffins, fruit breads, or granola bars.
5. **Provide fat-free, low-fat, or low-calorie foods and beverages.** Ideas include fat-free or low-fat dressings or toppings such as salsa, low-fat yogurt dressing, sweet mustard; low-fat or calorie desserts such as angel food cake; low-fat or skim milk, low-fat yogurt or cheeses; and lean meats, poultry or fish, cooked and dried beans, peas and lentils.

6. **Offer foods and beverages low in added sugars.** Unsweetened cereals, fruit spreads, cereal bars, water, 100% fruit juices, and regular and decaffeinated coffee or tea could be served. When half-and-half or whole milk is served, 1% or skim milk will also be provided.
7. **Serve foods that are low in salt and sodium,** such as fruit, fresh vegetables, unsalted pretzels, popcorn, or baked chips; grilled or roasted entrees; and entrees cooked with spices and herbs instead of salt.
8. **Include smaller portions** such as mini-muffins or mini-bagels and 1-inch low-fat cheese squares.