

Nutrition Standards for Meals Purchased or Served

Purpose and Impact

The Horizon Foundation is committed to supporting healthy living by ensuring that food and beverages purchased with Foundation funds, served at Foundation facilities, and/or provided by the Foundation at meetings and events, are of maximum nutritional value. The Foundation encourages its grantees and other Howard County organizations to adopt these or similar standards to help promote health and wellness in the county even when non-Foundation funds are used to purchase food.

The Foundation developed these nutrition standards:

1. To confirm and ensure that food and beverages purchased with Foundation funds meet updated, national nutrition guidelines;
2. To improve access to healthy food choices by contracting with vendors who provide more nutrient-rich food environments;
3. To further the cultural shift in support of health and wellness within Howard County and to help serve as a model for other Howard County organizations.

Nutrition Standards

These nutrition standards are based on, and follow the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020*.

Meetings and Events Standards

Standards that apply to all Foundation meetings and events regardless of the funding source:

- Ethnic/cultural customs should be honored by encouraging lighter versions of traditional foods that are provided as meals or snacks.
- Safe food handling procedures should be practiced consistently throughout the preparation, storage, distribution and service of food and beverages.
- When purchasing food as part of per diem employee travel, staff should be encouraged to purchase healthier food options.
- For guidance on types of food items that meet the nutrition standards refer to the Appendices.

When Foundation funds are used to purchase beverages and food:

- For purposes of this policy, "Sugary drinks" shall include regular (i.e., not "diet") soft drinks, sports drinks, and energy drinks; flavored waters with added sugar; teas with added sugar; and fruit drinks with added sugar that do not meet the beverage standards below.
- No sugary drinks shall be purchased by Foundation grantees and/or contractors.

- Food and beverages that are purchased must comply with the standards as outlined below. This applies to all food and beverages that are procured through catering services, restaurants, and grocery outlet purchases as well as to the procurement of pre-packaged snack food items.

Beverage Standards:

- No sugary drinks shall be served.
- Water should be available or accessible.
- Beverages should be served in bulk containers such as water pitchers whenever possible.
- Beverages that Meet Foundation Nutrition Standards:
 - Water, including carbonated water (no added caloric sweeteners);
 - Non-sweetened coffee or tea (if condiments are provided, regular sugar and sugar substitutes may be provided);
 - Plain (no added flavor or sugar) nonfat or 1% low fat dairy milk;
 - Plant derived milk (e.g., soy, rice, and almond) with ≤ 130 calories per 8-ounce serving;
 - 100% fruit or vegetable juice (limited to a maximum of 8 ounces/container);
 - Low-calorie beverages (including tea and/or diet soda) that do not exceed 40 calories per 8 ounce serving.

Food Standards:

- Healthier food options must be offered. Healthier options include the following (for additional examples of healthier food items, refer to Appendices):
 - Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low fat and low calorie foods, including low fat dairy, and lean or plant based protein sources;
 - Minimally processed foods made or produced without added sugar and less sodium;
 - Foods prepared using healthy cooking techniques;
- Larger items should be served in smaller portions [e.g., mini bagels (2 ½" diameter) or large bagels (4 ½" diameter) that are cut into halves or quarters; mini muffins (1 ¼" diameter) or other smaller versions of baked goods].
- Choose whole grain products when possible.
- Include a vegetarian option for all meals provided and consider a vegan option whenever possible.
- Offer seasonal and local produce, whenever possible.
- Serve fruit instead of sugary, high calorie desserts.
- Attempt to accommodate special dietary and cultural needs.
- Post nutritional information and/or list of ingredients for items served, whenever possible.
- If pre-packaged items are provided, 100% of these snack food items must meet the USDA Smart Snacks criteria (link: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/smartsnacks.pdf>). A list of products and distributors is available at the John C. Stalker Institute's A List (<https://johnstalkerinstitute.org/resources/school-snacks/alist/>)
 - Calories: 200 calories or less
 - Sodium: 200 mg or less
 - Total Fat: 35% of calories or less (with exceptions for nuts/seeds, nut butters, reduced fat cheeses)
 - Saturated Fat: 10% of calories or less
 - Trans Fat: 0 g
 - Total Sugars: 35% by weight or less (with exceptions for dried fruits)
 - Added Sugars: <7 g [see if there are standards now that this is on the Nutrition Facts label]

When no Foundation funds are used to purchase beverages and food:

- When food and beverages are provided by an outside agency and served at a Foundation venue or when food/beverages are donated by an outside agency to a Foundation-sponsored meeting, event, and/or celebration, staff will communicate this policy to event organizers and request that these standards be followed. It is the Foundation's intent that food and beverages served in these circumstances meet the nutrition standards above.
- When food/beverages are provided directly by Foundation employees for staff meetings, trainings, and/or celebrations, employees are encouraged to provide healthier options. The nutrition standards are not directed at individuals' meals/snacks that are purchased and/or brought from home.