

# Improving Hospital Food and Beverage Environments



**The CDC supports making the healthy choice the easy choice in every community setting.**

As major employers and health leaders, hospitals can help establish strong community norms for promoting healthy and active living through nutritious food and beverage, opportunities for physical activity, support for breastfeeding, and tobacco-free environments. This P2P Series presents case studies of hospitals improving their environment to better support the health of their employees and embody the mission of their organization.

### **IN THIS ISSUE...**

*find out how Cleveland Clinic and Good Shepherd Hospital are leading the way by offering a healthier food and beverage environment.*

### **Key Considerations**

- *Think about what statement the hospital is making to the public and its staff through food and drinks.*
- *Be comprehensive in the analysis of new initiatives and their impact on the hospital.*
- *Support from executives is crucial - success depends on support from the top.*
- *Believe in your initiative so that the passion is contagious-lighting fires within people instead of under them.*

### **Making a Statement**

**The Cleveland Clinic** employs over 18,000 hospital staff on its main campus alone. With the help of successful wellness programs and hospital policy and environmental changes, hospital employees have lost 180,800 pounds in just 15 months. Bill Barum, Senior Director of Hospitality credits some of that astonishing weight loss to changes made to the food and beverage environment inside the hospital. Barum and his colleagues phased out whole and 2% milk in favor of 1% and fat-free milk and replaced the fryers with ovens. Sugar-sweetened beverages were removed along with hundreds of other unhealthy foods. They also changed how their cafeterias operated. Barum said, "We took away the can openers and gave the cooks knives, replaced 70% of what was served in the cafeteria from processed foods to foods that we cook, cut, and process ourselves." Citrus fruits are used to flavor foods instead of salt and other additives.

There are high expectations of Cleveland Clinic and Barum thinks the food and beverage culture makes a strong statement about the organization. "I think it's the responsibility of the hospital to present the kind of environment that supports their mission statement and how they want to be viewed in the community. Presenting environments internally that support and augment that statement gives you more credibility in the marketplace and that is the responsibility of everybody that works here" Barum said. The food staff has received accolades for the changes made. Barum advises other hospitals to analyze how an initiative will impact the operation. Thinking through every angle at the beginning and being courageous about every effort will lead to success.

# Food + Service = Foodservice

Our hospital menu and the ingredients we used did not line up with the advice given to patients regarding a healthy diet” said Nancy Gummer, the Nutrition Services and Diabetes Education Manager at **Good Shepherd Hospital** in Hermiston, Oregon. That realization is what sparked the initial motivation for changing the food environment several years ago. When Good Shepherd switched from tray line to menu-style service for patients, they also changed from box-knife and reheating to cooking from scratch. Good Shepherd serves more whole grain dishes like quinoa, bulger, and brown rice. House-made breads, pancake mixes, and salad dressings allow them to use healthy ingredients and eliminate additives such as trans fat, MSG and sodium.

However, foodservice is not just about the food. “I wanted food service staff to shed the attitude that they were bottom rung in hospital hierarchy” said Gummer. She works hard to accomplish that by bringing in farmers and ranchers to talk to staff about the advantages of locally-produced foods. She also uses department meetings to show DVDs that pertain to food culture such as The World Banquet – By Invitation Only, Supersize Me, and Food Inc. and gives extra points on evaluations for reading food-related articles. “My goal is to get staff interested in the fact that food choices make a difference. I want them to feel like they are making a difference for the people they feed and their medicine is more powerful for promoting long-term health than the drugs prescribed here” says Gummer. She knows her efforts are working because staff turnover rates have dropped and feedback is positive.



## Key Considerations

- *To stay within budget, discontinue unwanted food items—simply adding high quality food will drive costs up.*
- *Partner with a facility that offers a healthy menu and adapt it to meet the needs of your hospital.*
- *Making healthy changes might be easier when a hospital is already transitioning the foodservice style.*

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