



Contact: Megan Hummel, Public Affairs Specialist
Phone: 513-946-7808
E-mail: megan.hummel@hamilton-co.org
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NEW FOOD AND BEVERAGE NUTRITION STANDARDS ADOPTED BY CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Guidelines will help fight childhood obesity

HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO – In an effort to help fight childhood obesity, Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) announced new guidelines for foods and beverages sold to students in the district's elementary and high schools. These guidelines ensure that foods and beverages sold in school vending machines, a la carte lines and school stores meet nutrition standards that place limits on calories, certain nutrients and portion size.

"We're improving the nutritional value of *all* the food we offer to students because we know that healthier kids feel better and learn better," said CPS Superintendent Mary Ronan. "It's simply the right thing to do."

"We already offer healthy meals through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs," said Jessica Shelly, CPS Food Service Director. "The district is now showing its commitment to improving the nutritional quality of all foods and beverages available for purchase by students."

By placing limits on calories, fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar, sodium and portion size, the new guidelines support a healthier school environment where only nutritious foods and beverages are sold to students during the regular and extended school day setting.

"Students consume up to 50% of their daily calories at school," Shelly said. "Providing healthy food and beverage choices will promote the health of our students, resulting in better attendance, improved behavior, lower incidence of illness, and increased attention, creativity, and academic achievement."

With nearly one-third of children and teens overweight or obese in the U.S., schools across the country are encouraged to develop competitive food guidelines to address food and beverage items sold in the school which compete with the regular school lunch. In Hamilton County, Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) and The Nutrition Council of Greater Cincinnati are guiding school districts through this process as part of the WeTHRIVE! Initiative – a comprehensive effort to prevent chronic diseases and obesity by improving the health of residents through increased physical activity and healthy eating.

"Having healthy eating habits is imperative to overall health and wellness, but in order to create healthy eating habits individuals must have access to healthy food options," said Stacy Wegley, HCPH Director of Health Promotion and Education. "This is a major step forward in increasing opportunities for healthy eating for thousands of students in our community."

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For CPS, the next step is to monitor compliance to the district's new nutrition standards.

"We are currently working with WeTHRIVE! to form Student Engagement Teams at all CPS high schools," Shelly said. "These student-led teams will receive guidance from the Nutrition Council in evaluating whether foods and beverages in vending machines, school stores and cafeteria a la carte lines meet the nutritional guidelines."

CPS' school beverage guidelines provide standards for calories and portion size for drinks sold to students. For example, milk can be plain or flavored, but must be fat-free or low-fat and provide no more than 150 calories per 8 ounces. Portion size is limited to 8 ounces for elementary school students and 12 ounces for high school students.

CPS' school snack food guidelines provide standards for calories and nutrient content for foods sold to students. For example, sweet or salty snacks are limited to 150 calories per serving for elementary school students and 200 calories per serving for high school students. Nutrient limits per serving are 35% of calories from total fat, 10% of calories from saturated fat, zero grams of trans fat, 35% sugar by weight, and 230 mg of sodium.

Additional examples of specific school food and beverage guidelines and more information on the WeTHRIVE! initiative can be found at www.WatchUsThrive.org.

Cincinnati Public Schools – a district with 57 schools serving a diverse population of more than 33,000 students in grades preschool to 12 – prepares students for life through rigorous academic programs, numerous enrichment opportunities and strong community partnerships. CPS is the first urban public school district in Ohio to earn the state's Effective rating. To learn more about Cincinnati Public Schools, visit the district online at www.cps-k12.org.

The WeTHRIVE! initiative promotes physical activity and healthy eating, reduced tobacco use and exposure, and builds community capacity for systems, environmental, and policy change aimed to reduce the burden of disease related to obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular illness. To join the movement, visit WatchUsThrive.org.

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