



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

Choose healthful vending machine fare

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Teresa Fair
(334) 206-5226

The Alabama Department of Public Health asks that you stop to consider the choices you are making before you insert your dollar bill or drop your change into a vending machine to grab a snack. Is it a healthful selection, or is it a food or drink that is low in nutrition and high in calories?

“The vision of the Alabama Department of Public Health is for Alabamians of all ages to embrace a culture of healthy choices as their normal way of life,” Miriam Gaines, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity director, said. In furtherance of that goal, the Health Department partnered with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services to develop a vending machine policy for pilot building locations in state agencies. The policy strives to make positive environmental changes by replacing unhealthy food and beverage options with more nutritious selections to support healthy behavior.

ADPH has also partnered with Canteen Vending to implement the healthy vending options in private entities. Baptist Health Systems, Jackson Hospital and East Alabama Medical Center are among the private sector businesses offering healthier vending machine options to their employees and customers using the “Good Choice” nutrition criteria.

The overall goal of this policy is to offer healthy choices while still allowing for free choice. Nutrition criteria were developed and used to identify healthful snacks. The policy specifies that 30 to 100 percent of food in vending machines meet the following criteria for each individual serving:

- 10 percent or less of the daily value of fat
- 10 percent or less of the daily value of carbohydrates
- 5 percent or more of the daily value of at least one: fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium or iron
- 360 milligrams or less of sodium

Some employees who work in the buildings where the “Good Choice” practice has been implemented have been surprised to learn that appealing snacks are also nutritious. Instead of

buying an item of minimal nutritional value, they now opt for food and beverages that promote good health.

In addition to workplaces, the State Board of Education has the same nutritional standards for school vending machines. This works to reinforce the same nutrition message. By using the same nutrition standards, families learn the same selection criteria--at work and at school. "What we are hoping is these skills will be used when selecting snacks at other locations, such as the grocery store or gas station," states Registered Dietitian Teresa Fair.

In recommending more healthful snacks in schools, policymakers noted, "Eating patterns developed as a child can influence the long-term nutritional status and have a significant impact on the risks--or preventing risks--of chronic diseases of childhood."

Ms. Gaines said, "While the improvements these policy changes represent may be gradual, they mean Alabamians are willing to make changes that will reduce the worsening obesity epidemic. Try to make good choices for your health every day."