FSD Best Practices:
Advice for Partner Agencies on Nutrition Education and Prioritization

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NUTRITION

Plan and execute nutrition education classes for your clients that connect them to the need for healthier eating habits. Involve community members and clients in developing your nutrition curriculum, or ask FSD for help. Be flexible and responsive to community needs, and survey clients to measure changes in behavior. Make nutrition classes as visible and accessible as possible, and create positive incentives to attend, such as a recipe sample or extra access to food.

Additional Advice

- Begin small with nutrition demos[1] and hosting interns, observe the impact these small actions have on clients, slowly implement more training and involvement
- Research nutrition and diet-related diseases and educate your staff in order to infuse a purpose into shifting to a nutrition pantry
- Increase client access to nutritious food by asking for healthier food donations and purchasing nutritious food from FSD
- Implement either "Foods to Encourage" or "CHOP" system (see below) at your pantry/distribution
- Build partnerships with community gardens, health clinics, and other health-minded organizations to collaborate on ways to reach your clients
- Include a nutrition provision as a key objective in your mission statement, strategic plan, staff work plans, procurement/donation policy and guidelines[2], inventory procedures and review, and/or formal policy agenda
- Reach out to FSD to host a Healthy Cook Nutrition Class series. Healthy Cook is a targeted approach to improving the health of a community receiving food from Feeding San Diego through multiple intervention points, such as parent/child nutrition classes, distribution of healthy whole grains and produce, recipes that match food distributed, cooking demonstrations, CalFresh screening, and monthly household eating habits and health survey.
- Attend a Train-the-Trainer session with FSD, where we teach staff members at your agency how to run your own Healthy Cook nutrition program on-site.

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[1] A "nutrition demo" is a cooking demonstration or recipe sample provided to clients to teach skills in creativity and healthy eating. The FSD team has many tools and materials that you may use for this, so please let us know if you are interested.

[2] See Appendix A: FSD Purchased Food Policy

What is CHOP?:

The Choosing Healthy Options Program (CHOP) is an inventory ranking system that simplifies nutrition. CHOP helps food banks and their partners acquire, distribute and promote healthier food. CHOP is a tool that helps us fight hunger, feed hope and fuel health in our community.

CHOP uses the Nutrition Facts Label and ingredient list to analyze and rank food, comparatively. Foods are organized into categories and ranked among other similar foods. For example, vegetables are ranked among other vegetables. Beverages are ranked among other beverages. Snacks & desserts are ranked among other snacks & desserts, and so on.

Foods will receive a ranking of 1 (choose frequently), 2 (choose occasionally), 3 (choose sparingly) or MC (minimal contribution). Items with more saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, cholesterol, and added sugar rank closer to a 3. Items with more fiber, vitamins, and minerals rank closer to a 1. These rankings are a simple way agencies can select the most nutritious items in our warehouse to distribute to their clients.

Below are a few examples of items and their ranking.

Ranking 1: Choose frequently

- Dried or canned beans
- Canned fruits and vegetables (no additives)
- Fresh or shelf stable milk
- Fresh produce
- Whole Wheat Pasta
- Oatmeal
- Canned Tuna
- 100% fruit juice

Ranking 2: Choose occasionally

- Beans & franks
- Canned peaches in syrup
- Chicken or vegetable soup high in sodium
- Chocolate pudding
- Granola bar
- Ravioli
- Vienna sausages

Ranking 3: Choose sparingly

- Canned pork
- Cheese crackers
- Cheeseburger skillet meal helper
- Cookies
- Fruit flavored drinks
- Packaged noodle soups
- Soda

What is "Foods to Encourage"?:

Because the broader food system has yet to agree on a consistent measure for nutritious food—despite the hundreds of evaluation approaches in existence, created by manufacturers, retailers and even food banks – FSD has moved away from even using the term "nutritious food" and instead focused our efforts on Foods to Encourage—foods that we know are lacking, often unaffordable yet are considered the most health promoting according to the 2010 DGA. By focusing and prioritizing these foods—fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy, we are in alignment with the external messages and nutrition science and also able to focus on the areas of our system to which we have greater control.

The foods in this first list would receive an automatic F2E, and do not need to meet further criteria.
- Fruit (nothing added)
- Vegetables (nothing added)
- 100% whole grain (e.g. Rolled Oats, Barley or Wild Rice)
- Unflavored/Unsweetened low-fat (1%) or skim/non-fat milk or yogurt
- Flavored skim/non-fat milk or yogurt
- Unsweetened Milk substitutes (e.g. Soy Milk, Almond Milk)
- Protein foods including:
- Eggs
- Nuts, Seeds, Beans and Lentils if nothing added (e.g. sodium)
- Plain water
- 100% Juice

Appendix A: FSD Purchased Food Policy

Policy Title: Purchased Food Policy

Purpose of Policy: Feeding San Diego is committed to meeting the nutritional needs of the people we serve by establishing nutrition standards for purchased food. This position is driven by our organization's values and a belief that we must responsibly manage monetary donations; make decisions that benefit the public that we serve; and, distribute nutrient-dense* food products that enhance the quality of life for the individuals we serve.

*Nutrient-dense foods and beverages provide vitamins, minerals, and other substances that may have positive health effects with relatively few calories. The term "nutrient dense" indicates that the nutrients and other beneficial substances in a food have not been "diluted" by the addition of calories from added solid fats, added sugars, or added refined starches, or by the solid fats naturally present in the food. Nutrient-dense foods and beverages minimize or exclude added solid fats, sugars, starches, and sodium. Ideally, they also are in forms that retain naturally occurring components, such as dietary fiber. All vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat milk and milk products, and lean meats and poultry—when prepared without adding solid fats or sugars—are nutrient-dense foods. For most Americans, meeting nutrient needs within their calorie needs is an important goal for health. Eating recommended amounts from each food group in nutrient-dense forms is the best approach to achieving this goal and building a healthy eating pattern for individuals, which leads to a healthy community overall.

Policy: Feeding San Diego, when appropriate and possible**, will purchase food items that are low in sodium, low in added fat, low in added sugar, packaged in light syrup or natural juices, and made from whole grains.

Applicability: This policy is applicable to all purchased inventory items.

Definition of Terms:

Low sodium is the equivalent of 480 mg of sodium per serving or less.

Low fat is the equivalent of 3g of total fat per serving or less and 0 grams trans-fat per serving or less. **Made from whole grains** is the equivalent of a whole grain listed as the first ingredient on the food label.

Low Sugar is determined by sugar not being one of the first three ingredients on the product label

**"….when appropriate and possible…." The food purchaser, to justify purchases that do not meet the nutrition guidelines, may use this caveat. The exceptions include but are not limited to: food is not available to purchase within fiscal parameters, food is not physically available and is part of the core inventory, a demonstrated lack of interest from clients has been documented and food is not rotating out of stock, and a specific demand by clients for a particular item can be documented.