

Healthy Food & Beverage Policy for WCRG Activities



When our environments are healthy, our families are healthy

Rationale:

The West County Regional Group (WCRG), sponsored by First 5 Contra Costa, strives to be a role model for health and wellness by promoting healthy food and beverage environments. Creating healthy environments is a critical strategy to reducing the alarming rates of childhood obesity¹ and Type II diabetes. The home, workplace, organizational, educational, and child-care environments are key places that shape healthy eating habits for families with young children. WCRG members believe that when our community environments are healthy, our families are healthy. In an effort to be an example for health and to support the families we serve to consume the healthiest foods and drinks possible, WCRG encourages its members and partners to follow these guidelines when purchasing food or beverages with First 5/WCRG funds or when serving foods and beverages at WCRG sponsored events, programs, and celebrations.

Policy:

All WCRG members are expected to follow these guidelines when purchasing food or beverages with First 5 funds or when serving foods and beverages at WCRG events, programs, activities, and celebrations.

Food:

When food is provided or served by the agency, healthy foods will be offered and promoted, such as:

- Fruits, vegetables, low-fat/low-sugar dairy products and whole grains².
- Lean protein³
- Foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, sodium, cholesterol, and added sugars.
- Reasonable portion sizes⁴
- WCRG members should observe all child safety guidelines addressing foods known to pose risks to young children (e.g. nuts, honey).

Beverages:

All beverages served during WCRG meetings, programs, events, and celebrations will meet the following nutritional guidelines. WCRG members will not use First 5/WCRG funds to purchase sugary beverages⁵.

- The group shall not serve sugar-sweetened beverages or 100% fruit juice. This includes but is not limited to: juice pouches/ boxes, Sunny D, Tampico, lemonade with sugar, punch, sports drinks, soda, or other beverages that contain sugar.
- Water will always be served free of charge. When possible, water will be served in pitchers rather than plastic bottles. Fresh fruit can be added to water for added flavor and appeal.
- Other healthy beverages that can be served include non-fat or low-fat plain milk (no chocolate or flavored milk); carbonated water without sweeteners, coffee, and tea.
- Beverages served to children will be age appropriate and meet the stated nutritional guidelines

Desserts and Treats:

If desserts and treats are offered during events and special occasions, fats and sugars will be served only in limited amounts and always when there are healthy alternative options. All desserts served will be accompanied by nutritional information and/or nutrition labels when possible.

¹Obesity in young children is linked to an increased risk of Type II diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, asthma, and orthopedic problems. Childhood obesity and overweight are linked to reduced socialization, lower self-esteem, poor school performance, and absenteeism. Overweight and obesity disproportionately affect low-income children and children of color.

²Whole grains include whole-wheat bread, pasta, tortillas, brown rice, oatmeal, barley, quinoa. Products should include 'whole grains' among the first ingredients listed.

³Lean protein includes lean meats, fish, tofu, beans, eggs, nuts, and low-fat dairy products. Lean protein has less than 3g of fat and around 50 calories per serving.

⁴Portions shall include a healthy balance of fruit, vegetables, protein, and grains. USDA's My Plate can serve as a guide for achieving a healthy balance. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

⁵Sugar sweetened beverages include all sodas, fruit drinks, sports drinks, and any beverage containing added caloric sweeteners, such as sweetened tea, rice drinks, etc.