

# Food banks addressing obesity with nutrition-related policies

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Food banks are altering their nutrition-related policies and practices to address concerns about the rise in obesity and diet-related diseases among individuals struggling to afford food, according to a study by the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. The study, published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, examines these strategies and identifies the challenges and opportunities related to their implementation.

"For those who struggle to put food on the table it is not just about too few calories, it is also about not having access to healthy foods and adequate [nutrition](#)," said Marlene Schwartz, senior author and deputy director of the Rudd Center. "In response, leading food banks across the country have adapted to strategically promote healthier foods and

beverages."

Researchers interviewed administrators from 20 food banks throughout country about their current nutrition policies and practices, and the barriers to change they have faced. All of the food banks that participated in the analysis were part of the Feeding America Network, a non-profit organization that consists of a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks.

The majority of food bank personnel reported that their organization's staff, board members, and community partners saw [obesity](#) and chronic disease as an issue that needed to be addressed by food banks. As a result, many food banks described efforts to provide more fresh produce to their communities.

Researchers also found that nutrition-profiling systems designed to evaluate the nutrient quality of the foods and beverages distributed by the food bank are gaining popularity at food banks as a valuable way to educate staff and other constituents about the quality of food available.

Some [food banks](#) reported that they implemented nutrition policies that would stop the distribution of junk foods, such as soda and candy; however, these policies were reported as being more controversial than other strategies. Food bank personnel reported that the obstacles to implementing these included fear of reducing the total amount of food distributed, discomfort choosing which foods should not be permitted, and concern about jeopardizing relationships with donors and community partners. However, the leaders interviewed who had made these policies found that donors were still willing to fulfill requests for healthier items, new donors were found, and donor education was an effective way to maintain strong relationships.

Provided by Yale University

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