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Healthy Eating in Recreational Facilities: A review of the food environment in Algoma



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For

Healthy Communities
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and
Algoma Public Health

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Executive summary

Providing healthier food and beverage choices in recreational settings can influence the behavior of people and improve their health by making it easier for them to access healthier foods.

To better understand the food environment in local recreation facilities, Algoma Public Health, on behalf of the Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma, invited representatives from recreation facilities across Algoma District to participate in an online survey. Questions in the survey focused on the following:

1. Healthier food choice policies and practices in recreation facilities
2. Barriers to developing healthy food policies or guidelines
3. How to help recreation providers develop healthy food choices in recreation facilities

Results from this research show that contacts at many of the recreational facilities across Algoma District are willing to explore the possibility of providing healthier food and beverage options in their facilities; some already provide these items in their vending machines or have begun to consider offering items such as yogurt smoothies.

There is readiness by many of these contacts to receive information and support regarding changes to their snack bars or concession stands that would make healthier food and beverage options available.

Many respondents indicated that making healthy food choices available in their facility would be hard. Barriers such as storage and preservability need to be addressed to reduce food waste; there is great concern about the risk of financial loss from offering items that patrons do not purchase or that spoil quickly. For some facilities, preparation area and budget are also limitations to offering healthier foods and beverages.

The report suggests many actions that could be considered to inform a strategy to support concession owners and operators who are interested in making changes to their food and beverages to increase access to healthier items. The suggested actions include:

- Engage in ongoing communication with owners and operators about ways to overcome challenges and to exchange knowledge about how to be successful in providing healthy food and beverage options
- Increase the availability and accessibility of training for staff and volunteers who handle food in recreation settings
- Conduct a trial with a variety of recreation facilities across Algoma District to demonstrate the profitability of selling healthier items
- Communicate with patrons to build their awareness and demand for healthier food items that may be added to snack bars and concession stands
- Collect a sample of healthy food and beverage policies and guidelines that exist in Algoma and across Canada to help inform future policy development work
- Prepare a business case that shows the viability of offering healthier food and beverage choices in recreational settings
- Review the promising practices from provincial initiatives and research referred to in this report. Engage in a dialogue with contacts from these initiatives about how they are supporting recreational settings

To begin movement towards a strategy for increasing healthier food options in recreational settings across Algoma District, all concession owners and operators could be sent this executive summary along with an invitation to receive ongoing communication. This would respect those who do not wish to receive additional information while providing an opportunity to those who did not respond to the survey to benefit from the findings and further work in this area. It would provide a listing of potential champions from recreational settings who may be willing to be involved to some degree in many of the actions proposed in this report.

Algoma Public Health's intent to distribute a consumer survey in April 2015 will help to address one of the questions asked often by facility contacts i.e., do patrons want healthier food choices offered at recreational settings and if so, what options would appeal to them. This is an excellent way to begin meeting some of the needs identified in this report.

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Introduction

In February 2015, Algoma Public Health, on behalf of the Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma, invited representatives from 25 recreation facilities across Algoma District to participate in an online survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide information about the food environment at recreation facilities including:

1. Healthier food choice policies and practices in recreation facilities
2. Barriers to developing healthy food policies or guidelines
3. How to help recreation providers develop healthy food choices in recreation facilities

This report summarizes the combined responses to the survey; individual recreation facilities are not identified.

Background

The Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma is a district-wide community-based program that is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The partnership aims to help people lead healthy and active lives.

In 2011, the partnership developed a Community Picture Report. The report provides a detailed overview of the Algoma region's community health and presents healthy eating as one of three top priorities identified consistently across all municipalities (Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma, 2011).¹

The Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (2010) recommends "increasing the availability of healthy foods and food choices (i.e. food from the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide) in schools, workplaces and public facilities and limit food and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt".²

Ontario's Healthy Kids Panel (2014) urges the provincial government to "extend Ontario's School Food and Beverage policy to apply to all publicly funded, subsidized or regulated settings where children play and learn, including...community sport and recreation facilities". The panel goes on to recommend that "until the single standard guideline is developed and approved, all settings should be held accountable for fully implementing any existing standards and guidelines and should have access to the resources required to implement those standards".³

Based on recommendations about improving food environments in recreational settings and the identification of healthy eating as a local priority, the Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma agreed to work to advance the following policy outcome: Increase the access to healthy food choices at municipal parks and recreational areas.

¹ Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma. (2011). *Community Picture Report – Algoma District*. Algoma District, ON: Author.

² Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (2010). *Evidence-Informed Messages: Healthy Eating*. (Pg. 1) Retrieved from http://www.ocdpa.on.ca/sites/default/files/publications/OCDPA_EM_HealthyEating_Full_Package.pdf

³ Ontario's Healthy Kids Panel (2014). *No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy*. (Pg. 37). Retrieved from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/healthy_kids/healthy_kids.pdf

As a partner with the Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma, Algoma Public Health agreed to take on a lead role to address this policy outcome to increase access to healthy food choices at recreation settings. This work fits with the health unit's mandate to work with municipalities to support policies and environments that encourage healthy eating in recreational settings. Specifically, Algoma Public Health is required by The Ontario Public Health Standards to implement a number of actions. Requirement six of the Ontario Public Health Standards (2008) related to Chronic Disease Prevention indicates that, "the board of health shall work with municipalities to support healthy public policies and the creation or enhancement of supportive environments in recreational settings and the built environment regarding healthy eating".⁴

Methodology

A dietitian and public health nurse at Algoma Public Health prepared an online survey with input from members of the Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma Committee (Appendix 1). They selected the survey questions based on the following sources:

- The Municipal Recreation Facilities Food Environment Audit Tool (Naylor, Vander Wekken, Trill, & Kirbyson, 2010)
- Understanding Healthy Food Choices In Recreation Facilities in the Counties of Lanark, Leeds & Grenville (Bergeron, 2012)
- Healthy Eating in Recreation Facilities in Sudbury (Sudbury & District Health Unit, 2014)

Members of the Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma identified recreation providers in a variety of recreational facilities across Algoma that were known to sell food and beverages in a snack bar, concession stand or vending machine (Appendix 2). The recreational facilities were located in the following municipalities across Algoma:

- Sault Ste. Marie
- Huron Shores
- North Shore
- Elliot Lake
- Blind River
- North Algoma
- Wawa
- White River
- Dubreuilville

Staff from Algoma Public Health sent 25 contacts at recreation facilities an email on February 6, 2015 inviting them to complete the online survey followed by reminder emails on February 23, 2015 and February 27, 2015 (Appendix 3). The contacts were offered an incentive of a free safe food handling course or a grocery gift card for \$250 as a draw prize.

Data was collected using Survey Monkey. It was transferred into Excel for analysis and theming.

⁴ Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (2009). *Ontario Public Health Standards*. (Pg. 29) Retrieved from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/cdp.aspx

Limitations

As with all research, this project had some limitations which should be considered when looking at the results. While the response rate to this online survey is good at 44 per cent, given the sample size was only 25, the total number of respondents is fairly small and cannot be generalized to other recreation providers. Respondent bias may also affect the results as the survey participants may have been highly motivated to participate.

Results and interpretation

Overview of respondents

A total of 11 participants representing seven municipalities of varying sizes across Algoma completed the online survey. They represented the following types of operators:

- Municipality (n = 5)
- Owner of recreation facility (n = 3)
- Not for profit organization (n = 3)

One of the respondents indicated that they are looking to establish a service contract for a private company to operate their cafeteria/snack bar.

Most of the respondents who represented municipalities indicated that they operate one snack bar or concession stand. One respondent indicated that they operate two snack bars or concession stands.

The following types of recreational venues exist at respondents' facilities where they provide food services:

- Municipal recreation facility (n=6)
- Municipal park (n=1)
- Municipal recreational fields (n=2)
- Privately owned/run recreation facility (n=2)
- Other (n=2 i.e., charitable recreation organization and education recreation centre)

Recreation facility infrastructure

Respondents indicated that they have the following types of infrastructure in their facilities:

- Five respondents indicated that they have a snack vending machine.
- Five respondents indicated that they have a beverage vending machine.
- Ten respondents indicated that they have a snack bar/concession stand

Availability of healthier food and beverage options

Table 1 shows the types of healthier food options that are available at respondents' facilities and how often the foods are available (never, special events such as tournaments and community events, sometimes as in most days or always).

Table 1. Types and frequency of food and beverage available at participating facilities

Type of food or beverage	Always	Most days	Special Events	Never
Fresh fruit	1	1	5	3
Raw or cooked vegetables served with minimum added salt, fat or sauces	1	0	2	6
100% fruit and/or vegetable juice	3	3	1	3
Whole grain products	2	3	0	5
2% milk	2	3	0	4
Hot chocolate made with milk	1	1	0	7
Yogurt (2% or less fat)	0	1	1	7
Meat, fish, and poultry prepared with minimum of added fat (e.g., baked, grilled, roasted)	1	1	2	6
Low fat and low sodium recipes or mixes for soups, gravies and sauces	0	1	2	6

Some healthier food choices are available in some recreation facilities. However, the majority of respondents never offer the healthier food items listed in Table 1 or if they do it is only for special events.

Of the healthier food items offered, whole grain products were the most popular, offered always or on most days at half of the respondents' facilities. Just over half of respondents (55.6 per cent) indicated that they offer healthier beverage options always or on most days.

Training

Only four of the respondents indicated that they provide training or information about healthy eating/nutrition. Two of these respondents provide the training or information for facility staff, one for volunteers and one for both staff and volunteers. The other seven respondents indicated that they do not provide training or information about healthy eating/nutrition.

Six of the respondents indicated that safe food handling training is provided. Four of these respondents provide the training for facility staff and two provide training for both staff and volunteers. Four of the respondents indicated that safe food handling training is not provided for staff or volunteers.

Interest in training

When asked if they would be interested in training, participants had a mixed response.

- Six respondents indicated an interest in healthy eating/nutrition training for staff or volunteers
- Six respondents indicated an interest in safe food handling training for staff or volunteers
- Three respondents were not interested in any of these offers at this time

Attitudes

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a selection of statements related to selling healthier food and beverage items in their recreational facilities. Table 2 outlines the results.

Table 2. Level of agreement with statements related to selling healthier foods and beverages

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We would offer healthier food choices if we understood better what our patrons would actually buy	4	4	2	0	1
We need to know more about what constitutes “healthy” food and beverage choices	2	5	0	2	2
The food choices we offer are directed by food service contracts that restrict the brands of foods and beverages we are allowed to sell	0	4	0	2	5
We associate the sale of healthier food choices with the loss of revenue	1	4	3	1	2
Making healthy food choices available in our facility will be hard	1	6	2	0	2
We are willing to explore selling healthier food choices	3	5	3	0	0
We are open to receiving information and resources to learn more about how to provide healthier food choices	5	5	0	1	0
We want to hear stories of recreation providers who offer healthy food choices	4	5	0	2	0
We think our customers would be receptive to healthier choices	2	2	5	2	0
We think healthy choices should be placed where they are visible to customers	3	7	0	0	0
We think healthy food and beverages should be provided at an equal or lower price to other food and beverages sold	3	7	1	0	0

Most of the respondents reported a willingness to explore selling healthier food choices. The remaining few were unsure.

Most of the respondents were agreeable to offering healthier food choices if they understood better what their patrons would buy.

Most respondents indicated an interest in receiving the following supports:

- Information and resources to learn more about how to provide healthier food choices
- Stories of recreation providers who offer healthy food
- What constitutes “healthy” food and beverage choices

All but one respondent agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- We think healthy choices should be placed where they are visible to customers
- We think healthy food and beverages should be provided at an equal or lower price to other food and beverages sold

Participants had a mixed response when asked if their customers would be receptive to healthier choices. Four respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their customers would be receptive to healthier choices, five were uncertain and two disagreed.

When considering the association between the sale of healthier food choices with the loss of revenue, there was also a mixed response. Five respondents associated the sale of healthier food choices with the loss of revenue. Three respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. Three respondents were uncertain if the sale of healthier food choices would hurt revenue.

When asked if they would be interested in receiving information about offering healthier foods to patrons, participants had a mixed response.

- Seven respondents indicated an interest in receiving information about offering healthier foods to patrons
- Three respondents were not interested in any of these offers at this time

Seven respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that making healthy food choices available in their facility will be hard. Two were uncertain about this statement and two strongly disagreed with it.

The number of facilities affected by a service contract is unclear. Four respondents agreed with the statement, “The food choices we offer are directed by food service contracts that restrict the brands of foods and beverages we are allowed to sell”. However, when asked to best describe who operates the cafeteria or snack bar, no respondents identified a service contract for a private company. One respondent indicated that they are considering a service contract in the future.

Barriers

The majority of respondents agreed that the following were limitations to providing healthier foods in their recreation facility:

- Storage (n=9)
- Preservability (n=9)
- Budget (n=7)
- Preparation area (n=7)

In addition, three respondents referred to lack of consumer demand as a barrier to providing healthier foods in their recreation facility.

“We have tried fresh fruit, milk products, soups, sandwiches, none sold enough and there was much more waste than product sold” (survey participant).

Policies

Respondents were asked if their facility had policies related to healthy eating

- Three respondents indicated their facility had an overall Healthy Food Policy that ensures the availability of healthy food and beverage choices for customers
- One respondent indicated that their facility had policies or guidelines that improve the availability of affordable healthier food and beverage choices (e.g., lower pricing for healthy food, providing discount coupons, vouchers)
- No respondents indicated that their facility had policies or guidelines that restrict the availability of less healthy food and beverages for customers
- One respondent did not know if their facility had any of the named policies or guidelines

Additional comments

Five respondents provided additional comments about healthier food choices in recreational facilities (Appendix 4). Most of these comments expanded on perceived barriers related to lack of consumer demand, the cost of healthier food options and preservability of foods to reduce waste. Two of the respondents further emphasized the need for their business to be viable.

Two respondents made comments that further indicate a value in providing healthier food options. One of these respondents indicated an interest in offering healthy smoothies. The other respondent indicated that their vending machines only contain healthier food items.

“...All items (in our vending machine) are nutritional...new venture that has been well received” (survey participant)

Considerations for next steps

The results of this survey indicate an overall interest and readiness by most respondents to explore the sale of healthier food and beverage options within their facilities. Most of the participants expressed their desire for information and support for this change to occur. They expressed uncertainty about consumer receptivity to healthier choices and a number of barriers that could affect profitability. Many respondents indicated that making healthy food choices available in their facility would be hard.

Based on the findings of this research, a number of actions can be considered to inform a strategy to increase healthier food options at recreation facilities in Algoma. Each of the recommendations builds on the need to develop strong relationships with concession owners and operators and their patrons. In the case of municipally owned properties, strong relations are required with municipal staff and elected officials.

Elements to consider based on overall responses from survey participants:

Communication with owners and operators

Finding ways to engage concession owners and operators could provide a means to collectively overcome challenges and provide support to create healthier food environments. Further engagement, would allow for discussion about the barriers of offering healthier foods and beverages which were identified in this survey, as well as addressing supports that the facility contacts indicated in the survey. For example, survey respondents showed an interest in receiving information to increase their knowledge on how to provide healthier food choices. Dialogue with facility contacts would allow for more details about the type of information they need such as marketing of healthier foods or placement of these foods within their snack bar or concession stand.

Given the challenges in bringing people together such as the time constraints of most concession owners and operators, along with geographical distances in Algoma District, consideration may need to be given to using electronic technology such as webinars, online discussion platforms and e-lists. Another option is to determine if the concession owners and operators already communicate or meet with each other and therefore look for ways to participate in those existing forms of communication.

The following types of information could be gathered and provided to concession owners and operators:

- What constitutes “healthy” food and beverage choices
- Patron demand for healthier food and beverage choices (pending results of a consumer survey drafted by Algoma Public Health)
- Training for staff and volunteers
- How to provide healthier food choices
- Stories of recreation providers who offer healthy food

The last two items listed should focus on the barriers that many survey participants indicated as limiting them from providing healthier foods in their recreation facility including:

- Storage

- Preservability
- Budget
- Preparation area

Training for staff and volunteers:

Work could be done with community partners and health unit staff to increase the availability and accessibility of the following training options for staff and volunteers in recreation facilities with snack bars and concession stands:

- Healthy eating and nutrition training
- Safe food handling training

Given the challenges in bringing people together due to time constraints of most staff and volunteers at recreational facilities and the geographical distances in Algoma District, consideration may need to be given to developing online training modules.

Trial

Based on the results of this research, there appears to be readiness by some of the respondents to increase the availability of healthier food and beverage options in their recreational facilities. Once more is known about patron demand for these options, a trial with three or more recreational facilities across Algoma may provide more information and confidence regarding the profitability of selling healthier items. Selecting a variety of venues from Sault Ste. Marie and from smaller municipalities could provide a rich source of data and case studies to further engage others from facilities across the District.

As part of the proposed trial, a well thought out tracking system should be considered to provide data to demonstrate how the sale of healthier food items affects profitability.

Communication with patrons

One concern raised by many survey respondents was consumer demand for healthier food and beverage options. A marketing campaign aimed at patrons could build their awareness for healthier food items that may be added to snack bars and concession stands. The campaign might include posters, point of purchase messaging, banners, emails through sport clubs, information in municipal leisure guides and other communication material that have proven to be effective in Algoma or by groups working to increase healthier food consumption in recreational settings across Canada.

Policy

Based on the findings from this research, at least three of the recreational facilities in Algoma District have an overall healthy food policy that ensures the availability of healthy food and beverage choices for customers. One has policies or guidelines that improve the availability of affordable healthier food and beverage choice (e.g., lower pricing for healthy food, providing discount coupons, vouchers).

Collecting a sample of these policies along with others from across Canada could help inform future policy development work across Algoma District. For example, The Ontario Chronic

Disease and Prevention Alliance (2010) provides a number of recommendations regarding healthy food policies in recreation facilities including:

- “Guidelines for food and beverages sold in snack bars and cafeterias and served at meetings, special functions, and community events
- Pricing strategies that put the cost of healthier food and beverage choices (e.g. vegetables, fruit, and milk) lower than the cost of food and beverages low in nutritional value/ nutrient density
- Promotional strategies that feature healthier food and beverage choices prominently on menu boards to encourage purchase of these items
- Elimination of advertising and marketing of food and beverages of low nutritional value/low nutrient density on menus, menu boards, vending machines, scoreboards, pool floors, gyms, etc.
- Provision of nutrition education for all food service staff
- Establish policies to support the use of local foods in the community and for municipal or regional food venues, community programs and events, including: Local sustainable food procurement practices for municipal food services and recreation facilities, grocery stores, food markets, and convenience stores”⁵

More investigation may be needed to determine which recreational facilities in Algoma District are served by a food service contract. These contracts could place restrictions on the variety of foods and drinks that vendors are allowed to sell. As these contracts are put in place or renewed they could provide an opportunity to ensure healthier food and beverages are allowed. A strong business case will be needed to demonstrate how these healthier options may impact profitability.

Business case

Preparing a business case is an important tool in communicating the viability of offering healthier food and beverage choices in recreational settings. This business case can be referred to during meetings with decision makers such as concession owners and operators. It can also become an important tool in engaging municipal staff and elected officials in policy development.

Additional research

Many health units and healthy community partnerships (HCP) across Ontario such as those listed below are looking for ways to increase the sale of healthier food and beverages in recreational settings.

- Ottawa Public Health
- Durham Region Health Department
- Middlesex-London Health Unit
- Niagara Region Public Health
- Peel Public Health
- Chatham-Kent HCP
- Grey Bruce HCP

⁵ The Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance. (2010). *Toolkit to Healthier Communities*

– *Influencing Healthy Public Policies*. (Pg. 68). Retrieved from:
http://www.ocdpa.on.ca/sites/default/files/publications/OCDPAHCToolkit_Final_ENG.pdf

- Lambton County HCP
- Wellington Dufferin Guelph HCP
- Oxford County HCP

HC Link, as part of their support of the Healthy Community Partnership undertook a scan of the partnerships' 2014-15 proposals. A request could be made to HC Link to identify from that scan additional partnerships who are addressing the sale of healthier foods and beverages in recreational settings. The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health is a good source to identify additional health units working on this topic.

A request could be made to organizations such as HC Link or The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health to provide a platform for people to engage in a dialogue regarding their work in recreational settings. The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health already has a working group in place to address this topic. Algoma Public Health is represented at this working group.

Topics of discussion could include:

- The role of public health in supporting recreational facilities
- Building relationships with concession owners and operators, municipal staff and elected officials
- Popular healthy choices offered in recreational settings
- Methods to assess if offering healthier food and beverages in recreational settings generates additional sales
- Marketing material used to reach patrons
- Creating a business case
- Sample policies to support healthier food and beverages in recreational facilities

The work of provincial initiatives could also be reviewed to determine lessons learned and promising practice. See Bergeron (2012) especially page 8 for a listing of provincial initiatives to increase healthier food choices in recreational facilities. An example of this work is the Stay Active, Eat Healthy Program developed in British Columbia. Information, tools and resources for municipal recreation facility staff, industry and consumers can be found on their website: stayactiveeathealthy.ca.

Sharing findings of this research

To begin movement towards a strategy for increasing healthier food options in recreational settings across Algoma District, all concession owners and operators could be sent an overview of the results of this research along with an invitation to join an e-list to receive ongoing communication. This would respect those who do not wish to receive additional information while providing an opportunity to those who did not respond to the survey to benefit from the findings and further work in this area. It would provide a listing of potential champions from recreational settings who may be willing to be involved to some degree in many of the actions proposed in this report. A follow-up call may be necessary to further build better relationships with these contacts and to increase their understanding regarding the value of further communication and potential benefits to them.

Conclusion

Accessibility to healthier food and beverage options can influence individual food choices. Results from this research show that contacts at many of the recreational facilities across Algoma District are willing to explore the possibility of providing healthier food and beverage options in their facilities; some already provide these items in their vending machines or have begun to consider offering items such as yogurt smoothies.

There is readiness by many of these contacts to receive information and support regarding changes to their snack bars or concessions stands that would make healthier food and beverages options available. In particular, the contacts would like to better understand what items their patrons would be most interested in purchasing and how to best provide these items. This purchasing information might include reference to marketing and product placement based on stories from contacts at other recreational facilities that have been successful in selling healthier foods and beverages.

Barriers such as storage and preservability need to be addressed to reduce food waste. This is particularly important for seasonal establishments and those who cater to special events or tournaments. For some facilities, preparation area is a limitation to offering healthier foods and beverages. Budget is another barrier for recreational facilities; there is great concern about the risk of financial loss from offering items that patrons do not purchase or that spoil quickly.

Many inexpensive short-term actions, as well as more intensive and expensive actions, can be taken by Algoma Public Health and other partners of the Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma to support concession owners and operators who are interested in making changes to their food and beverage offerings to increase access to healthier items. The health unit's intent to distribute a consumer survey in April 2015 is an excellent first step to seek input regarding consumer demand for healthier food options.

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Appendix 1 – Survey

Note: Algoma Public Health provided this survey in English and French.

Healthier Food Choices in Recreation Settings Survey

Community recreation facilities are gathering places for people of all ages. They provide safe, public spaces for physical activity and create a social environment that can strengthen a sense of community. The availability of healthy food options at these facilities can have a positive impact on the health of residents in the community.

As a partner of Algoma Healthy Communities Partnership Committee, Algoma Public Health invites you to participate in an online survey to help us better understand the current food environment at recreation facilities including:

1. Healthier food choice policies and practices in your recreation facilities;
2. Barriers to developing healthy food policies or guidelines; and
3. How to help recreation providers develop healthy food choices in recreation facilities.

The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete and your participation is voluntary. The information will be summarized into a report, individual recreational facilities will not be identified. Data will be themed. The report will be used to understand the current food environment at recreation facilities and the issues of offering healthy food choices and to help inform the planning of a strategy to increase healthy food options at recreation facilities.

All completed surveys will be eligible to be entered into a draw for your choice of a free Safe Food Handling Course or a grocery gift card for \$250 from a store of your choice.

The deadline to complete the survey is by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, February 27, 2015.

We appreciate your participation in this survey! Your feedback is important. If you have any questions about this project or require additional information on how to serve healthy food choices at your facility, please contact Alison Dutkiewicz – adutkiewicz@algomapublichealth.com or 705-942-4646 ext.3048

Healthier Food Choices in Recreation Settings Survey

1. Does your recreation facility have a snack vending machine?

- Yes
 No

2. Does your recreation facility have a beverage vending machine?

- Yes
 No

3. Does your recreation facility have a snack bar/concession stand?

- Yes
 No

4. If yes to snack bar/concession, which one best describes who operates the cafeteria/snack bar?

- Municipality (publicly operated)
 Owner (of recreation facility)
 Service Contract for private company
 Not for profit organization
 Other*

Other (please specify)

5. If you are a Municipality, how many snack bar/concessions stand do you operate in recreational facilities and/or parks?

Healthier Food Choices in Recreation Settings Survey

6. Please check how often the following foods are available in your facility.

	Never	Special Events such as tournaments, community events	Sometimes (most days)	Always
Fresh fruit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Raw or cooked vegetables served with minimum added salt, fat or sauces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
100% fruit and/or vegetable juice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whole grain products	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2% milk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hot chocolate made with milk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yogurt (2% or less fat)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meat, fish, and poultry prepared with minimum of added fat (e.g., baked, grilled, roasted)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low fat and low sodium recipes or mixes for soups, gravies and sauces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Do you provide training or information on healthy eating/nutrition for:

- Facility staff
- Volunteers
- Both
- None of the above

8. Is safe food handling training provided for:

- Facility staff
- Volunteers
- Both
- None of the above

Healthier Food Choices in Recreation Settings Survey

9. Consider the following statements and indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
We would offer healthier food choices if we understood better what our patrons would actually buy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We need to know more about what constitutes "healthy" food and beverage choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The food choices we offer are directed by food service contracts that restrict the brands of foods and beverages we are allowed to sell.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We associate the sale of healthier food choices with the loss of revenue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making healthy food choices available in our facility will be hard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Healthier Food Choices in Recreation Settings Survey

10. Consider the following statements and indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
We are willing to explore selling healthier food choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We are open to receiving information and resources to learn more about how to provide healthier food choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We want to hear stories of recreation providers who offer healthy food choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We think our customers would be receptive to healthier choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We think healthy choices should be placed where they are visible to customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We think healthy food and beverages should be provided at an equal or lower price to other food and beverages sold.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Which, if any, of the following are limitations to purchasing healthy food in your recreation facility?

	Yes a limitation	Not a limitation
Budget	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Storage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparation area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preservability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>	

Healthier Food Choices in Recreation Settings Survey

12. Does your recreation facility have:

	Yes	No	Unknown
An overall Healthy Food Policy that ensures the availability of healthy food and beverage choices for customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policies or guidelines that restrict the availability of less healthy food and beverages for customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policies or guidelines that improve the availability of affordable healthier food and beverage choice (e.g., lower pricing for healthy food, providing discount coupons, vouchers)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. I would be interested in:

- Healthy eating/nutritional training for staff or volunteers
- Safe food handling training for staff or volunteers
- Information on offering healthier foods to patrons
- Nothing at this time
- Other

Other (please specify)

14. What types of recreational venue(s) are included where you provide food services?

- Municipal recreation facility
- Municipal park
- Municipal recreational fields
- Privately owned/run recreation facility, i.e. bowling alley
- Franchise owned/run recreation facility, i.e. fitness centres
- Other

Other (please specify)

Healthier Food Choices in Recreation Settings Survey

15. What municipality best represents your work location that you were considering when answering the questions in this survey?

- Blind River
- Bruce Mines
- Dubreuilville
- Elliot Lake
- Hilton Beach Village
- Hilton Township
- Huron Shores
- Jocelyn Township
- Johnson Township
- Laird
- Macdonald, Meredith and Aberdeen Additional
- Municipality of Wawa
- North Shore
- Plummer Additional
- Prince
- Sault Ste. Marie
- Shedden (Spanish)
- St. Joseph Township
- Tarbutt and Tarbutt Additional
- Thessalon
- White River
- Unorganized Algoma (please state name e.g. Goulais, Searchmont)
- Other

Other (please specify)

16. If you have any other comments about healthy food choices in your recreation facility? Please list.

Healthier Food Choices in Recreation Settings Survey

17. Thank-you for completing the survey. To enter the random draw "click here"

Appendix 2 – Listing of facility contacts invited to complete the survey

1. Achieve Fitness for Women
2. Bellevue Park
3. Essar Centre
4. Soo Curling Club
5. George Leach Center
6. Northcrest Lanes
7. Northern Community Centre
8. Rocky Dipetro Field/Track
9. Sault College Athletic Department
10. Soo Pee Wee Arena
11. Tarentorus Sports Club
12. YMCA, Sault Ste. Marie
13. Iron Bridge Arena
14. Thessalon Memorial Community Arena
15. Bar River Community Centre
16. Desbarats Arena
17. Echo Bay Sportsplex Arena
18. Garden River Education/Recreation Centre
19. Elliott Lake Arena/Pool
20. Elliott Lake Ski Hill Mt. Dufour
21. Blind River Community Centre Arena
22. Searchmont Resort (downhill ski)
23. Treetop Adventures
24. Michipicoten Memorial Community Centre
25. White River Recreation Centre (Arena, Curling Rink and Fitness Centre)
26. Dubreuilville Arena

Appendix 3 – Survey invitations sent to recreation facility contacts

1st Email that went out to providers:

Subject - Healthy Food Choices Survey

Algoma Public Health as a partner of Healthy Communities Partnership Algoma invites you or someone else on staff to participate in an online survey to help us better understand the current food environment at recreation facilities including:

1. Healthier food choice policies and practices in your recreation facilities;
2. Barriers to developing healthy food policies or guidelines; and
3. How to help recreation providers develop healthy food choices in recreation facilities.

The survey will be anonymous and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete and is available until February 27, 2015. The survey is available in both English and French, the links are listed below.

We are also offering an opportunity for a random draw of either a free Safe Food Handling Course or \$250 grocery gift card for completing the survey.

Visit:

English Recreation Provider Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HealthierFoodChoicesinRecreation>

French Provider Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VZXN8C2>

We appreciate your participation in this survey! Your feedback will help the Partnership increase the body of knowledge we need to make our community even healthier.

If you have any questions about this project or require additional information, please contact me

–

Alison Dutkiewicz.

2nd Reminder Email:

Subject: RE: For Recreation Contacts with Concession Stands and/or vending machines

Hi Again

I'm just sending out a reminder of the Healthy Food Choices Survey which I sent out last week. If you know that your arena, or recreation facility or municipal park or fields sell food to the public, please take a few minutes to complete the survey – your input is valuable to us. The links are listed below

Visit:

English Recreation Provider Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HealthierFoodChoicesinRecreation>

French Provider Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VZXN8C2>

Thanks

Appendix 4 – Additional comments provided by survey respondents

“Vending machines are provided by a healthy food vendor! All items are nutritional...new venture that has been well received. Our canteen struggles to be financially viable as our clientele is looking for potato chips, candy and pop...which we have limited or no supply of. We do have baked chips, but they are not a big seller. It is an interesting struggle especially given that we are a fitness facility interested in promoting health and well-being! Tough go....we are looking to contract the service out and are worried about the contract so as to not stray too far into the unhealthy category however, we want a business to be viable”.

“In the future we are considering offering healthy smoothies so timing of this survey is good”.

“Eating healthy is very expensive. Our concession is mainly to provide drinks and a snack. We are not open for great lengths of time so it's important that we choose wisely to ensure less waste”.

“Caveat - the municipal office hires the people who run the canteen, which is not my department. I am filling out this survey as the Recreation Coordinator, but have little or no say in hiring practices or food choices at the site. Important note: I believe that a lot of the problems with healthy food choices is systemic and social - most folks seem to want the food offered at the arena canteen, and even the quality of that food is based on cost and convenience, and even at that, no one seems to care that things like fresh cut fries etc. the Municipality did have a very conscientious food preparer (i believe it was a tendered business opportunity at the time, and not an employee-based arrangement as it is now), who provided healthy alternatives (homemade soups/chili/wraps), most of which were popular with only one group that uses the arena, the figure skaters. This person's work and caring for providing both what was popular as well as healthy food choices was exceeding, but the amount of time and care she took was not reflected in any increase in revenues; to the contrary, and this is only hearsay, but she likely ended up making less per hour because of her attention to providing healthy food choices”.

“We try to offer nutritious bars as something that has a reasonable shelf life. We offer soup, chili on tournament weekends but it is pre-packaged and just heated up. We hire students and have limited ability to prepare fresh foods at the venue. It is our experience that even when healthier options are provided, parents allow their kids to eat fries, chicken nuggets, Gatorade and pop. They are the most popular sellers by far”

“(Need to improve) knowledge and culture of both staff hired to prepare and provide food, and of clients who like crappy food (fries, hot dogs, pop, "sports" drinks etc.).”