

Leadership support and effective communication can help negotiate and overcome challenges during implementation



Leadership support and effective communication can help overcome challenges when implementing changes to your food and drink provision. Whether implementing the *Healthy Choices guidelines* or the Victorian Government's *Healthy choices: Policy directive for public health services (Policy directive)* the following tips can help your health service negotiate the changes.

Leadership support is a crucial first step

- Successfully implementing *Healthy Choices* in your organisation requires support from management and the executive team. If you're finding it difficult to gain momentum ensure you have their support before getting started. If you need help in securing management support the Healthy Eating Advisory Service has a [free e-learning module, 'Getting management on board'](#).

Not everything has to be done at once

- If you're a public health service implementing the *Policy directive* there are targets to be met by set dates (drink compliance by 30 September 2022 and food compliance by 30 September 2023), but you can start by conducting an audit of your food and drink environment. This can help to understand where change needs to be made and where to start.

Free training and resources are available

- Stakeholders from different backgrounds will have different levels of education, past experiences and skills. Not everyone may have the same level of food and nutrition knowledge. It may be helpful to identify the different skill mix and potential gaps and upskill if required through planned education sessions, meetings, training or orientation.
- The Healthy Eating Advisory Service has [free e-learning modules to educate key stakeholders](#) (cooks, chefs, management, point of sale staff) on the *Healthy Choices guidelines*.
- In addition, [we have other resources for understanding the Policy directive](#) including:
 - explainer videos – an overview of the *Policy directive* and relevant requirements
 - fact sheets – understanding sugary drinks and vending planograms to meet the *Policy directive*
 - frequently asked questions – common questions and answers about the *Policy directive*
 - infographic – key information for food service staff about the *Policy directive*

AlfredHealth

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Negotiating resistance to change with clear communication

- If you are experiencing resistance to proposals or plans from staff and/or consumers, seek their feedback and provide an action plan in response. This may involve changing or increasing key messaging and communication.
- Some individuals may have the perception that the organisation is 'taking away' the right to food and drink choices. Be clear in the communication that the *Healthy Choices guidelines* and *Policy directive* aim to reduce the proportion of unhealthy food and drinks available, but increase the overall number options by introducing or increasing healthier alternatives.

It takes a team!

- Delegate and share the workload with other internal or external stakeholders - diversifying the people involved in this project ensures sustainability of this work. Escalate to your manager or leadership team if more resourcing is required (this could be short or long-term).
- Health services are a dynamic environment, and often staff turnover can be high with progress being delayed if key members within the organisation are away or leave. To overcome this, and build sustainability, it is important that you make many different departments or areas aware of the work being undertaken so they can assist if staffing structures change.

Upskilling and seeking support

- Menus and products often change throughout the year. It is helpful to have a process for adding new menu items and products, and ensuring they still meet the requirements of the *Healthy Choices guidelines* or *Policy directive*. You could upskill retailers and food service staff to use FoodChecker when assessing new menu items. Alternatively, you may request recipes and items be assessed by one key implementer before adding them to your menu.
- Consider utilising students or volunteers to help with audits or any data collection to reduce the burden and resourcing required.
- If you need support using FoodChecker or understanding the *Healthy Choices guidelines* or *Policy directive* the Healthy Eating Advisory Service are the experts and can assist you in all stages of implementation.

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