



# Taking Stock

Creating Healthy Changes at  
Grocery Stores and Small Markets



For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. Funded by USDA SNAP-Ed, an equal opportunity provider and employer. Visit [www.CaChampionsForChange.net](http://www.CaChampionsForChange.net) for healthy tips.

Local health departments can help grocery store owners improve the availability, quality, and cost of healthy foods they sell – working in partnership with community-based organizations and neighborhood residents.

Depending on your goals, there are many ways to work with store owners to achieve healthy changes in grocery stores and small markets.

**THE CX<sup>3</sup> TOOL MEASURES HEALTHY CHANGE.**

The *CX<sup>3</sup> tool* lets communities survey their strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in obesity prevention. *CX<sup>3</sup>* stands for *Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention*. The tool was developed for community use by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch.

- “*CX<sup>3</sup> community indicators*” are best practices for healthy change (also called “standards of excellence”).
- The “*CX<sup>3</sup> community indicators*” in the following tables can help measure grocery store and small market improvements, over time.

This fact sheet can also be used by health departments that have not conducted a *CX<sup>3</sup>* assessment but share the goal of improving the food retail environment.



**CX<sup>3</sup> Community Indicators**      **How Can Local Health Departments Work With Store Owners and Community Partners?**

**MORE AVAILABILITY**

Improve the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods.

<p>Does the store sell a variety of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh fruits?</li> <li>• Fresh vegetables?</li> <li>• Other healthy foods?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Survey customers</b> to learn what fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods they <i>would buy</i>.  <b>Consider using:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer comment cards.</li> <li>• A board with a list of new healthy products, so customers can check off which items interest them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Identify distributors that offer stores a variety of fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods. Ask distributors to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry more <i>healthy food choices</i> (like low- or reduced-sodium beans).</li> <li>• Make healthy choices easy to find at the warehouse, or featured on order forms.</li> </ul> <p><b>Create more space in the store to add healthy foods.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust shelf height and add new shelves or coolers.</li> <li>• Only display two rows of the same product on a shelf (move extra items to storage).</li> <li>• Remove slow-selling items and replace them with healthy choices.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ask the store to always stock a minimum amount of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh fruits and vegetables.</li> <li>• Low-fat dairy.</li> <li>• Whole grains.</li> <li>• Low- and reduced-sodium items.</li> </ul> <p><b>Introduce new healthy products one or two at a time. Provide serving suggestions and special offers.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Suggest ways</i> for customers to enjoy more fruits and vegetables.</li> <li>• Offer <i>pre-cut salad, stir fry, or soup kits</i>.</li> </ul>
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**BETTER QUALITY**

Improve the quality of fruits and vegetables sold in the store.

Does the store sell good quality:

- Fresh fruit?
- Fresh vegetables?

**Trouble shoot *problem spots* with fruit and vegetable *handling*.**

**Contact the distributors who sell food to the store. Ask what technical help and resources the distributors can offer store owners.**

**Ask the store to stock fruits and vegetables in season, when possible.**

- Check whether there is a Farm to Fork network in your area.
- See if there is a *food hub* that gets fruits and vegetables from local growers operating in your area.
- Consider ordering fruits and vegetables for stores directly from local farms.

**Identify ways to use overripe vegetables in value-added products *for sampling*—for example, freezing bananas to use in smoothies.**

**Replace old *refrigerators* with energy efficient ones.**

- Ask if your local utility company offers:
  - Rebates or credits for energy efficiency upgrades.
  - Resources for making energy efficiency store improvements.

**AFFORDABILITY**

Ensure that local customers can afford healthy food options.

Does the store offer:

- Good prices for fresh fruits and vegetables?
- CalFresh/SNAP acceptance?
- WIC acceptance?
- Posters and signs about using CalFresh and WIC?

**Encourage the store apply to accept *SNAP* (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or *WIC* (Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children).**

- Display signs for *CalFresh* and *WIC*.

**Ask *CalFresh* and *WIC* participants what products they want to buy.**

**Contact distributors who sell food to local stores.**

- Identify distributors with the best prices for quality products.
- To keep prices low, select fruits and vegetables in season.

**Offer *temporary discounts* on popular healthy items, such as:**

- Buy 1, Get 1 Free (BOGO).
- Customer loyalty cards.
- Student or senior discounts.
- Holiday or special event kits and sales (like a Fourth of July BBQ kit, Thanksgiving meal kit).

**PRODUCT PLACEMENT**

Promote healthy choices at checkout and in the store.

Does the store offer a checkout area:

- With healthy foods?
- Free of high-fat, high-sugar foods?

**Create a *Healthy Checkout Lane*.**

- Display fruit in baskets at checkout.
- Make a smart snacking zone near the checkout.
- Consider pre-cut fruits and vegetables in grab-and-go containers.
- Display “healthy” toys for sale near the cash register, like jump ropes or balls that promote physical activity.
- Move high-fat, high-sugar choices away from the checkout area.
- Move ads for unhealthy foods, tobacco, and alcohol away from the checkout area.

**Display healthy foods prominently in the store.**

- Display fruits, vegetables, and other healthy items near the front of the store or in other prominent locations.
- Use end cap displays at the ends of rows to promote healthy products where there is visibility and traffic.
- Remove unhealthy (high-sugar, high-fat) items from the eye level of children, when possible.

**HEALTHY MARKETING**

Showcase available healthy choices in the store.

Does the store:

- Offer health information near fresh fruits and vegetables?
- Remove in-store ads that promote high-fat, high-sugar items?
- Displays in-store ads that promote healthy foods?
- Use tools from the *Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch—Retail Program*?

**Work with the store to remove ads that promote high-fat, high-sugar items. Promote healthy foods instead.**

- Replace ads for high-fat, high-sugar items with information about fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food items.
- Hang *shelf talkers* and other educational materials near fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Promote seasonal fruits and vegetables with *Harvest of the Month resources* and retail signs.
- Invite the store to participate in the *Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch—Retail Program* to get a variety of tools, resources, and outreach activities.

**Clearly display prices and information about sales.**

**Offer special events to promote healthy foods, such as taste tests or cooking demonstrations.**

- Promote new snack items with activities at local schools or recreation centers.
- Consider organizing a *community event* to celebrate healthy changes. Invite community leaders and ask residents to speak about what the changes mean to them.

**Promote healthy changes in the store to the community:**

- Local news, TV, and radio
- Community-based organizations
- Neighborhood e-lists and list serves (like Yahoo! Groups)

**ATTRACTIVE AND SAFE STORE EXTERIORS**

The storefront reflects the healthy choices that are available inside.

Does the outside storefront:

- Display ads for healthy foods?
- Avoid ads promoting high-fat, high-sugar foods?
- Comply with *Lee Law* limits on ads on windows of stores with an alcohol license?
- Replace bars on store windows?
- Display fruits, vegetables, and healthy options in front of the store?

**Remove unhealthy advertising from outside storefront.**

- If the store has a liquor license, ensure that the owner complies with California’s *Lee Law*. (The store may not cover more than 33% of windows with signs or ads).
- Post ads for healthy foods on outside storefront.
- Ask the local planning department if your city allows food sales outside the store (this is called “sidewalk encroachment”).

**Organize community improvement events.**

- Organize a mural painting project to promote healthy foods.
- Plan a community clean-up day inside and around the store.
- Organize a community event to plant trees, shrubs, and/or flowers in front of the store.

**Apply for *grants and loans* to improve the outside storefront (“façade improvements”), such as:**

- Wash and/or paint storefront.
- Hang banners, replace awnings, and more.

**Remove bars from store windows. Replace them with solid security gates.**

**WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS**

Local residents can safely walk or bike to the store.

Is the area around the store:

- Safe and walkable within two blocks of the store?

**Use *Safe Routes to School* approaches that support walking and bicycling if youth visit the store.**

- Contact the city planning department to request improvements that make it safer for kids to walk, bike, or roll to school, including:
  - Sidewalk repairs.
  - New crosswalks.
  - Street lights.
  - Traffic calming measures, and more.
- Ask your city how to install a bike rack.
  - Some cities offer funding for bike racks.
  - If the bike rack is on public property, you may need an “encroachment permit” (city permission to use the sidewalk).
- Ask customers what changes they would like to see to make the neighborhood safer for kids.

**Make improvements in front of the store to make it easier and safer for kids to be physically active.**

- Request that the city repair broken sidewalks near the store.
- Consider working with the store owner or landlord to install pedestrian-height lighting on the outside storefront. This can make the store more visible and improve safety.
- Talk to the local police department about ways the store owner and community partners can improve safety.
- Install a garbage can in front of the store. If the garbage can is on public property, you may need an “encroachment permit” (city permission to use the sidewalk).

**Reach out to other merchants. There is power in numbers!**

- Consider asking other neighborhood businesses to establish a merchants association.
- Talk to the local business improvement district or chamber of commerce about healthy changes in the neighborhood.



## Resources

### **ChangeLab Solutions: Changes in the WIC Package: A Toolkit for Working with Neighborhood Stores**

[www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/WIC-toolkit](http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/WIC-toolkit)

### **ChangeLab Solutions: Green for Greens**

[www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/green-for-greens](http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/green-for-greens)

### **ChangeLab Solutions: Health on the Shelf**

[www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/health-on-the-shelf](http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/health-on-the-shelf)

### **CX<sup>3</sup>—Tool to survey community health**

Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention

[www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/CX3\\_Main\\_Navigation.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/CX3_Main_Navigation.aspx)

### **The Food Trust: Sell Healthy Guide**

<http://foodfitphilly.org/FOODFITPHILLY/assets/File/Sell%20Healthy%20Guide%281%29.pdf>

### **Healthy Corner Stores Network**

[www.healthycornerstores.org](http://www.healthycornerstores.org)

### **Healthy Food Access Retail Portal**

<http://healthyfoodaccess.org/>

### **National Good Food Network**

[www.ngfn.org](http://www.ngfn.org)

### **Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch—Retail Program: Fruit & Vegetable Produce Handling Guide**

[www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-RP-ProduceHandlingGuideFPFC.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-RP-ProduceHandlingGuideFPFC.pdf)

### **Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch—Retail Program: Merchandising Materials**

[www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/RetailMerchandising.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/RetailMerchandising.aspx)

### **Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch—Retail Program: Produce Marketing Guide**

[www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/retailfruitandvegmarketingguide.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/retailfruitandvegmarketingguide.aspx)

### **California FreshWorks Fund**

[www.cafreshworks.com](http://www.cafreshworks.com)

### **Healthy Food Financing Initiative**

[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/resource/healthy-food-financing-initiative-0](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/resource/healthy-food-financing-initiative-0)

### **California Department of Food and Agriculture Farm to Fork**

[www.cafarmtofork.com](http://www.cafarmtofork.com)

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Photo by Tim Wagner for HEAC (page 5).



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