

School Fundraisers Supporting New Smart Snacks Guidelines

On July 1, 2014, the federal nutrition standards that regulate ALL foods and beverages sold in schools went into effect. These standards, set by the United States Department of Agriculture, are called “Smart Snacks”, These standards are specifically improving “competitive foods”, or foods and beverages that are not sold as part of the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program. These foods and beverages are commonly found in snack bars, school stores, vending machines, and during fundraisers.

The United States Department of Agriculture has given states the authority to create a policy regarding fundraising exemptions. In Colorado, the state Department of Education has determined that schools can allow three fundraisers that are exempt from the Smart Snacks standards per school building per year.

To ensure compliance with the nutrition standards, PTA’s are incorporating a nutrition and health focus on their meetings, events, and fundraisers. Many PTA’s have incorporated healthier snacks into their school snack bars and school stores which have seen an increase in revenue with these changes. Taste tests are popular with the students because it allows them to try different foods while allowing parents, teachers, and school staff to learn what the students do and do not like.

PTA’s are also transitioning to non-food or healthy fundraisers through 5ks, 1-mile fun runs, walk-a-thons, or bike-a-thons, and hosting a Fun and Fitness Day that included 10 stations such as a climbing wall and obstacle course. There may be community support for these events as well. Schools are also promoting school spirit and increasing revenue by selling items like water bottles, socks, or t-shirts with their school logo.

Many schools have seen increases in fundraiser revenues because many of these events allow you to sign up and donate online so that you don’t have to worry about carrying cash or swiping a credit card. Schools may also see increased revenues because all of the profits are going back to the school and the funds aren’t being shared between a company and the school.

Promoting physical activity and healthy eating in the community allows parents, children, and other citizens to accept a culture of health and wellness and strive to improve their own health and the community’s health.

Transitioning to healthy fundraisers takes hard work and dedication from everyone who is involved in planning and organizing the events. To initiate such a transition, your PTA can set small goals such as making half of your current fundraisers non-food fundraisers, e.g., sell fresh fruits and vegetables from your school garden or host a farmers’ market at your school, sell carnations for Valentine’s Day instead of chocolates and candies.

When implementing the Smart Snacks guidelines, helpful resources that are available to you. The Colorado Department of Education has developed a PowerPoint with information about Smart Snacks. The webpage (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition/nutricompetitivefoods>) also contains USDA resources and partner resources such as the Smart Snacks Product Calculator that was developed by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and Information regarding state policies.