

## Five Star Dining Promotional Materials



# Creating Environmental Changes to Make Healthy Choices Easy!

## Summary

Onondaga County suffers from high rates of obesity, and for many, limited access to healthy food options. To reach a large segment of the population, the Onondaga County Health Department implemented the "Five Star Dining Program" to improve offerings in the cafeteria at the Civic Center, a major employer in Syracuse.

## Challenge

Overweight and obesity is a significant health issue. Currently 27.9% of adults in Onondaga county are obese while 35.2% are overweight. This means that approximately 6 in 10 adults in the county are either overweight or obese. Unfortunately, low income adults and adults living with a disability have even higher obesity rates. The obesity rate in the county among adults with an income less than \$25,000 per year is 33.9%. Among disabled adults in the county, the obesity rate is 38.7%.

Adults spend nearly half of their waking hours at work and of the more than 200 food-related decisions made per day, approximately half are made at work. Therefore, to reach a large segment of employees at once, strategies to address healthy eating in the workplace make sense.

## Solution

The Onondaga County Health Department, in collaboration with *La Cuisine*, the cafeteria located in the Onondaga County Civic Center, implemented the Five Star Dining Program. Located in the city of Syracuse, the Civic Center employs over 3,000 individuals. The intervention works to increase healthy food and beverage offerings, modify the placement of healthy items, and adjust the pricing of items to incentivize healthier purchases. Onondaga County Health Department conducted research with various stakeholders including Onondaga County Facilities Management, the Wellness Coordinator, the Employee Wellness Committee, and *LaCuisine*, the company who operates the cafeteria, to garner support, buy-in and approval to implement the Five Star Dining Program. In addition, employee surveys were conducted to ascertain employee interest in modifying the food items and to identify products employees would like. Nutritional analysis of food items and menu modifications were done, and promotional materials were created to promote not only Five Star Dining, but also healthy foods and beverages in general. Now Five Star Dining provides a daily hot and cold lunch option with 500 calories or less that includes vegetables and fruits for \$5. Ongoing employee feedback and sales data is compiled.

*"Two male customers, Ted and Steve, have both been eating "5 star" since day one. Ted had lost 4 pounds as of last week and Steve had lost 5. Steve was so happy about the results that he didn't even want to take advantage of the free lunch, he paid for it, and shunned the new card!"*

*-Employee Testimonial*

## Lessons Learned

- **Important Lessons:** Work cooperatively with employees in advance to ascertain what their healthy food preferences are. This can be achieved by working with employee wellness teams, employee surveying, and/or conducting focus groups. Ongoing promotion is necessary.
- **Barriers:** Be cognizant to the fact that some employees will not be open to “healthy food options”. Ensuring that there is a “choice” in food options is essential. Offering some options with smaller portions is also valuable.
- **Sustainable Policy Change:** A healthy worksite cafeteria policy provides sustainable changes that make a positive impact on employees and visitors of the Civic Center cafeteria.

## Achieving Sustainable Success

Partnering with a large employer in Syracuse to ensure the availability of healthy options at the worksite is a significant step to achieving healthy food access. Since the start of the Five Star Dining Program, the sales of healthy food items have increased. Additionally, this model has led to offering “Meatless Monday”, Farm Fresh Friday, a Smoothie Bar, and the addition of no sugar beverages at reduced cost.

**Type of Change:**  
Environmental, Policy,  
Practice

**Expected Outcome:**  
Healthier eating

**Setting:** Community

**Reach:** 3,000+

### Contact

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## Healthy Cafeteria Policy



Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities