



SHOP HEALTHY NYC!

Implementation Guide

An innovative approach to changing the food retail environment



Department of
Health & Mental
Hygiene

Center for
Economic
Opportunity

Contents

 Working with Retailers	2
 Working with Suppliers and Distributors	7
 Working with the Community	8

About the Guide

Who should use this guide?

Health departments, community organizers or other groups that want to implement and manage a healthy food retail program in their community.

What does it contain?

Guidance for a team of staff on how to work with all major components of a food retail program: retailers, suppliers, distributors and community members.

Are you interested in supporting a single food retailer?

If you are an individual or group that does not have the capacity to run a comprehensive food retail program, you can still make a difference in your neighborhood! See the **How to Adopt a Shop** guide to support a local food retailer in stocking and promoting healthy foods and beverages.

How to Use the Implementation Guide

This guide is designed to help public health agencies and other organizations implement and manage a healthy food retail program in a high-need community. Based on lessons learned, the guide describes Shop Healthy NYC's approach to working with each of the major participants: retailers, suppliers, distributors and the community.

To facilitate work with community groups, the New York City Health Department created the companion **How to Adopt a Shop**, a guide that provides simple steps for individuals or community groups interested in working with local retailers to increase healthier offerings.

Shop Healthy NYC!

Access to affordable, healthy food is essential to good health. New York City is home to more than 1,000 supermarkets, more than 25,000 corner stores (bodegas), thousands of mobile fruit and vegetable vendors (including NYC Green Carts) and nearly 140 farmers' markets, each playing a role in the health of city residents.

Shop Healthy NYC is a New York City Health Department initiative, in partnership with the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, that aims to increase access to healthy food and engage residents and organizations to support sustainable food retail change in their community. The program, launched in 2012, grew out of years of intensive work with more than 1,000 retailers in high-need communities of the city, and targets multiple types of food retailers. Shop Healthy NYC defines areas by zip code and typically works exclusively in two to three adjacent zip codes for one year.

To ensure a long-term impact on food access, Shop Healthy NYC aims to influence supply and demand by: reaching out to food retailers to increase stock and promotion of healthy foods, including intensively working with stores to meet specific goals; collaborating with distributors and suppliers to facilitate wholesale purchases and widespread promotion of healthy foods; and engaging community constituents (customers) to support participating retailers and increase neighborhood access to healthy foods.

Shop Healthy NYC addresses supply and demand



Working with Retailers

Increasing access to healthy foods means making changes wherever people shop. Depending on the community, those places may include supermarkets, corner stores, farmers' markets and mobile fruit and vegetable vendors. Working with diverse retailers increases the impact of an intervention on neighborhood food access, but may require different approaches depending on retailer type.

Corner Stores and Supermarkets

Working to make healthy changes in corner stores and supermarkets is similar, although each has its unique opportunities and challenges.



Corner stores are typically small, independently owned retail outlets offering a limited range of foods and beverages. They are patronized by customers looking for quick-sale convenience items. These stores often sell and advertise unhealthy, calorie-dense items and may not offer or have the space for fresh foods. However, these retailers are established community assets and may serve as neighborhood gathering places.

Supermarkets offer more fresh produce and other healthy foods than corner stores, but they still advertise and sell many unhealthy items. Although most supermarkets have produce sections, the fruits and vegetables often can benefit from improved storage and display. In addition, many markets in high-poverty areas are small, independent stores with limited staffing, making it more difficult to make changes.

New York City corner stores in high-need neighborhoods typically receive

700+

customer visits per day, with 70% of these customers shopping there at least weekly.* In New York City, corner stores can comprise up to 80% of a neighborhood's food retail venues.†

* Dannefer R, Williams DA, Baronberg S, Silver L. Healthy bodegas: increasing and promoting healthy foods at corner stores in New York City. *Am J Public Health.* 2012;102:e27-e31.

† Graham R, Kaufman L, Novoa Z, Karpati A. Eating in, eating out, eating well: Access to healthy food in North and Central Brooklyn. New York, NY: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2006.

Shop Healthy NYC's Approach

Identify stores

Identify and map all food retailers in the selected area. Engaging all retailers creates a neighborhood "movement."

Reach out to all stores

Over a period of two to three months, visit all stores to introduce the initiative and recruit those interested in making more intensive changes to meet specific goals (see page 4). Framing the program as a business opportunity (rather than a public health effort) increases buy-in.

Set goals for stores

Set specific goals for recruited stores based on community needs and interests and on feasibility, such as working to improve store inventory, placement and promotion of healthy items (see page 4).

Distribute marketing materials

At the initial visit, request permission to post branded marketing materials that advertise healthier foods – blanketing the neighborhood retail environment with consistent messaging.

Provide technical assistance

Visit recruited stores one to two times per month for six months to help owners implement goals, provide training and resources and build your relationship.

Provide incentives

Provide incentives, such as baskets to create attractive displays for produce or reusable shopping bags for customers.

Recognize store achievements

Distribute proclamations or certificates to recognize retailers that meet the goals. Promote these retailers in the community to support sustainability of healthy changes.



Proclamations and certificates are great opportunities to recognize store owners.



Brand your program.

Develop a logo and graphics for all promotional and marketing materials. This will help retailers, suppliers, distributors and customers identify and promote healthier items.

Shop Healthy NYC's Goals for Stores

Shop Healthy NYC's goals focus on increasing the inventory of healthy products and encouraging their consumption through prominent placement and promotion.

Product

- **Offer healthy sandwich and meal combos at the deli counter (if applicable).**

The majority of retailers have a deli, but most do not promote a healthy option. Offering healthy alternatives at attractive prices promotes healthier eating.

- **Stock low-sodium canned goods and canned fruit in 100% juice.**

Most of the sugar and salt we eat comes from packaged, processed and store-bought food. The majority of stores already stock canned goods, so it makes sense to provide a healthier alternative to existing products.

- **Stock at least two healthy snacks.**

Children frequently shop at corner stores near their schools, purchasing more than 350 calories/day of mostly junk foods.* Stocking healthier snacks helps kids (and adults) make better choices.

- **In supermarkets, improve the produce section.**

All supermarkets have a produce section, but the quality varies greatly. Training retailers in produce procurement, handling and display is a win-win: stores sell more of these high-margin items and the community gains access to higher quality fresh fruits and vegetables.

Placement

- **Offer fruits and vegetables at the front of the store or at the checkout line.**

In supermarkets, create and maintain a healthy checkout aisle.

Placing produce in high-visibility areas and at checkout increases impulse purchases of these healthy items.

- **Display water and low-calorie drinks at eye level.**

The obesity epidemic has many causes, but a large contributor is consuming sugary drinks.† Encourage consumption of healthy beverages by placing them at eye level.

Promotion

- **Promote healthy foods and beverages throughout the store.**

The food industry spends billions of dollars each year marketing unhealthy products. In contrast, healthy ads typically make up a small percentage of ads in stores. Promoting healthy items helps level the playing field.

- **Remove all advertising from the entry door.**

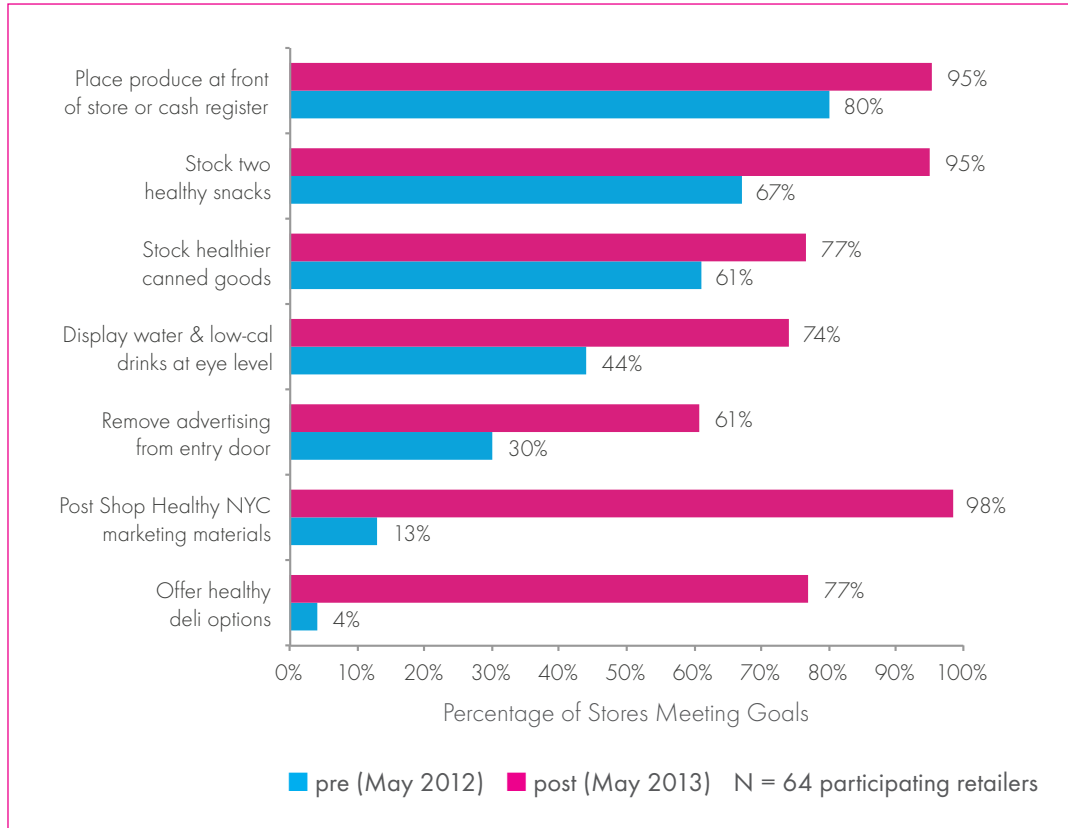
Doors are commonly littered with ads for unhealthy products. A clean door – with only EBT or WIC signs and a Shop Healthy decal – is attractive and inviting to customers.

Manage your expectations from the outset: Not all stores will be interested in participating, and even those that show initial interest may not follow through on all of the goals. To manage staff time and resources, it may be necessary to cap the number of outreach attempts and follow-up technical assistance visits.

* Borradaile KE, Sherman S, Vander Veur SS, et al. Snacking in children: the role of urban corner stores. *Pediatrics*. 2009;124:1293-1298.

† Malik VS, Schulze MB, Hu FB. Intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and weight gain: a systematic review. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2006;84:274-288.

Stores Partnering with Shop Healthy NYC See Results!



There's a reason the food industry spends billions of dollars each year to market unhealthy foods – advertising works. Your food retail program can help by promoting healthy foods. In one Shop Healthy NYC neighborhood, outreach staff posted promotional materials for healthy products in 170 stores, and shifted the ratio of unhealthy to healthy ads from about 11:1 to 1:1.

Staffing: Shop Healthy NYC spends one year in each neighborhood. Outreach staff simultaneously work with retailers and community groups in order to build relationships and cross-promote the work.

Workload: Outreach staff work in pairs to make initial visits to 30–50 stores to introduce the program and gain buy-in to distribute marketing materials. Staff then work one-on-one with approximately 10 stores that have committed to specific goals.

Farmers' Markets and Mobile Fruit and Vegetable Vendors

Farmers' markets and mobile fruit and vegetable vendors already offer healthy products, such as seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables, and may not need assistance with healthier products or their placement. However, these retailers may need help in promoting their location and in generating community support.



Support local vendors by hanging promotional posters at your organization.

Shop Healthy NYC's Approach

Reach out to and promote these vendors

Visit all vendors in the selected area to introduce the initiative and initiate relationships. Promote the locations of vendors through posters and maps. Use similar branding to cross-promote all healthier food retailers in the neighborhood.

Provide technical assistance

Provide support to existing healthy food retailers to best promote and sell their healthy food options. Offer assistance around pricing, display and produce handling. Provide infrastructure and materials, such as baskets and price signs, to improve product display. Eliminate barriers to accepting food stamps when possible.

Involve vendors in community programs and events

Encourage community organizations to purchase food from these vendors for events and meetings. Invite vendors to street fairs and other community events. Encourage community programs to visit vendors as part of their nutrition education programming or community engagement work.

Farmers' Market Resources in NYC

Health Bucks are \$2 coupons redeemable for fresh fruits and vegetables distributed by community organizations and at farmers' markets as an incentive for using SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits.



Stellar Farmers' Markets offer nutrition education and cooking demonstrations at participating markets.

For more information, visit nyc.gov and search **Farmers' Markets**.

Working with Suppliers and Distributors

To ensure that retailers can easily purchase and sell healthier foods, it is critical to work with suppliers and distributors. Many stores cite the supplier as the reason they do not carry a particular item. Working with suppliers can make it easier for retailers to identify and purchase healthier options for their customers, helping stores to sustain their improvements beyond the duration of the food retail program.

Shop Healthy NYC's Approach

Identify the major suppliers/distributors by asking neighborhood retailers where they purchase their foods.

Develop relationships with the suppliers/distributors, specifically with their sales representatives and/or community relations managers (often located at company headquarters).

Request changes (see "asks" below):

Sample "Asks" of Suppliers/Distributors

Develop order forms	Create an order form for healthy foods or highlight healthy foods on an existing form.
Create advertisements	Include information on healthier items in a printed circular or through other mailings or advertisements.
Develop a sell sheet	Create a one-page, image-based sell sheet for retailers that showcases healthy items.
Offer discounts	Offer a discount on or create coupons for selected healthy items.
Provide samples of new items	Provide promotional quantities of healthier alternatives to existing products (e.g., baked chips) for a buy-one-get-one (BOGO) sales campaign.
Post marketing materials <i>If the supplier/distributor has a warehouse</i>	Display educational shelf talkers, magnets or other signage to promote healthier items in aisles.
Provide information on your initiative <i>If the supplier/distributor has a warehouse</i>	Host an information table about the initiative to encourage retailers to participate. Provide samples of healthy items as an incentive to draw retailers to your table.

Staffing: One Shop Healthy NYC staff person works with three to five suppliers and distributors for one year. The number of suppliers and distributors will vary depending on their level of interest and participation.



Online Resource: What Are Healthy Foods?

In 2008, New York City established nutrition standards for foods purchased and served by all city agencies. Shop Healthy NYC follows these standards for identifying healthier products. For more information, visit nyc.gov and search **NYC Food Standards**.

Working with the Community

A robust neighborhood-level food retail program engages and empowers residents as partners in creating change. Community members ask for and purchase healthier foods, “adopting” their local retailer and showing support for healthy changes with their wallets. Stores will stock what their customers buy. However, changes made by retailers, suppliers and distributors to increase the supply of healthier foods are sustainable only if consumer demand for these products can be guaranteed. Community support is essential to maintaining these changes when your program ends.

Shop Healthy NYC reaches out to the entire neighborhood, including residents, schools, elected officials, community organizations and businesses to create a true community-wide effort. It is important to recognize each group’s unique contribution.

Think Big When Identifying Community Assets



Staffing: Shop Healthy NYC spends one year in each neighborhood. Outreach staff simultaneously work with retailers and community groups to build relationships and cross-promote the work.

Workload: One full-time Shop Healthy outreach staff person contacts 40–50 community groups, with the goal of providing technical assistance and support to five to ten participating groups.

Shop Healthy NYC's Approach

Develop partnerships

Build relationships with organizations doing similar work or those with complementary goals. Working with established community groups will help your efforts to engage residents and increase your program's reach.

Seek community input

Find out what residents want through community conversations, focus groups or interviews. These methods of engagement help solicit input on food access, gauge community support and better understand shopping habits and perceptions of the local retail environment.

Reach out to all community groups

Reach out to key community groups, such as not-for-profits and faith-based organizations, to introduce the initiative and encourage participation.

Provide technical assistance

Assess a group's level of interest and involve them appropriately. Some groups may simply want to support the initiative by distributing maps of participating retailers and posting branded marketing materials. If groups express a greater level of interest, work with them to Adopt a Shop by engaging their local retailer to increase the stock and promotion of healthy foods. See the **How to Adopt a Shop** guide for more information.

Educate

Hold nutrition education workshops for community residents to discuss how, why and where to eat and shop healthy.

Publicize

Highlight participating retailers, suppliers, distributors and community groups via local media outlets, newsletters, social media and press releases/events and through community partners.

Mobilize the Customer Base:

Residents participate in a Shop Healthy Bronx trip to the farmers' market to purchase fresh, local fruits and vegetables.



For more information:

 311

 nyc.gov and search Shop Healthy NYC

 shophealthy@health.nyc.gov



Department of
Health & Mental
Hygiene

Center for
Economic
Opportunity