

Healthy food access

NARRATIVES AND HEALTH EQUITY: EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION

Lifelong health for everyone is not possible without access to a stable, healthy food supply. Yet in reality, healthy food is currently not available for everyone across the state. The emerging narrative helps reveal the role of policies in creating access to healthy and affordable food—policies that often favor the interests of business over people and make it challenging for people in some communities to access healthy food.

1. A diversity of food cultures and traditions should be embraced and celebrated.
 - a. People are able to recognize healthy food choices through their own food traditions.
 - b. Eating junk food shouldn't be a symbol of assimilation/acceptance.
2. All people want healthy food; healthy food is not just a trend of the elite.
3. Food is central to families, communities and cultures. Foods are an expression of love of family, culture and community. We have an opportunity to provide access to foods that nurture health, knit families, and sustain communities.
4. People should have access to healthy food no matter where they live.
 - a. Where people live should not determine their access to healthy and affordable food, because healthy food is essential to support the health of everyone in Minnesota.
 - b. Healthy food is not, but should be affordable and accessible to all people and all communities in Minnesota.
 - c. Not all Minnesota communities enjoy the same opportunities that make access to healthy food possible.
 - d. Communities are entitled to fair distribution of healthy food.
5. No one should be targeted with junk food messages and unhealthy food.
6. Healthy food is a right; food access must be fair and just.
7. All people deserve to live with dignity and health. "You are what you eat," therefore everyone deserves to have healthy food to eat.
 - a. Everyone deserves ready access to healthy food.
 - b. Access to healthy food is not just about cost; people deserve to have healthy food.
 - c. We all eat healthier when we all can eat healthier.
8. Health disparities are not inevitable—we can eliminate them by improving access to healthy food.

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9. We need a food access policy and practices that are based in a principle of, “do unto others, what they would want to be done.”
10. Current access to healthy and affordable food is created by past and current policies that often are driven solely by interests of business. New and revised policies need to account for a broader set of interests, e.g., community development, population health, healthy start for children, opportunity to age in place, etc.
11. Healthy food is the foundation of a healthy community. Communities are vibrant and thriving when a healthy food system is in place. Economic vibrancy and healthy food access support each other.
 - a. Healthy food is essential for a healthy, productive workforce.
 - b. Healthy food is essential for educational success: when we eat better, we feel better, and we think better.
 - c. The future of the state (of America) is dependent on a healthy start for all children. Access to healthy and affordable food provides nutrients needed for brain development that can provide the foundation for good health over a whole lifetime. The community has a role to protect children and elderly (no specific frame identified on the elderly).
12. Healthy food is necessary for each person to reach their full (physical, social, educational, economic—i.e., human) potential.
 - a. The overall food environment in the U.S. is not healthy and affects everyone, regardless of income (i.e., packaged, processed food dominates in every grocery store, even in “natural” food coops).
 - b. The U.S. food industry produces 3800 calories per person per day, but we only need about 1500-2000 calories per day. Marketing promotes overconsumption. Just providing calories without taking nutrition into consideration undermines health.
13. People need to live in communities that have a healthy food system. People need a food environment, culture and systems that support:
 - a. Healthy eating
 - b. Healthy relationships
 - c. Educational success
 - d. Healthy land
 - e. Healthy food norms
 - f. A healthy workforce
 - g. A healthy economy
 - h. Food skills
14. Communities can be a part of developing innovative solutions to healthy food access that can be sustained over time.
15. Everyone in the community is healthy when we are healthy together.
16. People shouldn’t have to “swim upstream” to eat healthy food (i.e., have to make extraordinary effort in order to eat healthy food). People can’t make healthy choices if healthy food is not available or affordable.
17. The food systems involves everything from growth to garbage. Decisions at every point in the food system should encourage access to healthy food for all people and communities [HiAP].
18. Decisions about food access must involve all the people affected by those decisions, including decisions about distribution chains and cost of delivery.

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19. Decisions about access to healthy foods should consider the needs of people as well as the need for businesses to be profitable.
20. Healthy communities need a basic array of businesses including those that could support basic access to healthy foods.
21. Policy should support access to foods that enhance the ability of communities to live healthy lives through foods grounded in their culture, families and communities.
22. We are all responsible for shaping the food system. It is our collective responsibility to create better access to healthy and affordable foods.
23. Consumers have power to shape the food systems (communities, individuals). Access and demand are inextricably linked.
24. The long term costs of easy access to unhealthy foods are too expensive to ignore. Increased access to healthy foods now, will reduce health care costs in the future.
25. Healthy food can be profitable and affordable.

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