

Tulane assists in state healthy vending initiative

|

Naomi King Englar, Tulane PRC staff

[View PDF](#)

Vending machines on Louisiana state property are about to get healthier, thanks to efforts by Tulane University nutrition experts.

Tulane staff led by [Diego Rose](#), professor and head of the Nutrition program at the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and a faculty co-investigator at the [Tulane Prevention Research Center](#), and Brittany Kovacs, MPH, nutrition program manager, are working with state officials to implement new nutrition standards in snack and beverage vending machines throughout Louisiana.

Specifically, Rose and Kovacs are meeting with and assisting staff at the state Office of Public Health to develop trainings next year for the vendors who supply and operate the machines. Many of those vendors are part of the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program, which ensures individuals who are blind a priority in the operation of vending facilities on state-owned property. Future trainings with Louisiana-based Randolph-Sheppard vendors will cover what the new standards are and how vendors can change their offerings to meet these standards.

"Our goal is to make healthy choices easier for people by increasing accessibility to healthy food, and facilitate improved health in the state," Kovacs said. "Training for vendors is a big piece of implementation." Earlier this year, Rose and Kovacs, along with other Tulane associates, worked with state officials and health organizations, including the American Heart Association, to provide guidance on nutrition standards and the benefits of offering more healthy options to employees and visitors of state buildings and property. On June 30, Governor John Bel Edwards signed an executive order to establish healthy vending standards. The order requires all snack and beverage machines on state-owned property or leased property to meet certain

nutrition standards beginning in July 2018.

"Currently, the state is ranked as one of the two least healthy in the nation by America's Health Rankings annual report," Rose said. "Offering healthy vending options is a low-cost way to create a healthy food environment, which might ultimately lead to lower rates of diet-related chronic diseases."

(Stock photo courtesy of Voices for Healthy Kids)