Healthy Menu choices Act, 2015

Summary of MOHLTC Technical Briefing – March 23, 2016.

A technical briefing was held on March 23 and EHD (Christina and Steve), C&FH (Renee) and CS (Blake Chauvin) representatives attended.  The regulations will come into effect January 1, 2017.

At this time we know the following:

* PHIs will be enforcing the regulation and will be provided appointment identification under the legislation.
* Protocols under the OPHS are being developed to support the implementation of the Act and its regulations.  Short form wording is still in the development stage for the regulation.
* PHI’s role will be enforcing the legislation and ensuring that calories are posted in the way that the legislation requires it.  It appears as though they will not assess the accuracy of the caloric values. Rather they will be verifying documentation that the premises has used a nutrition database or laboratory for verification of the caloric value.
* The onus is on the food premise to use a reliable source for determining calories.  There will be no auditing process to verify accuracy.
* There will be training offered by the province to support PHI implementation in the Fall, 2016.
* A central registry will be created by the province to identify food premises that must comply with legislation.  A survey will be sent to Health Units in the near future to help determine these establishments.
* We don’t know yet if infractions to the Menu Labelling requirements will have to be posted on the public disclosure system.
* MOHLTC will be making a decision in the future regarding whether inspections of the food premises will be done on a complaints basis only (vs. requiring inspections to be done as part of regular inspection).
* The MOHLTC will provide support to Health units for resources they need – but they did not explain what this means.
* They MOHLTC intends to produce an Industry Implementation Guide, Q&As, factsheets to support industry with implementation.
* MOHLTC is considering evaluation of the policy to determine effectiveness and impact.
* Schools, daycares, long-term care facilities and mental health institutions are exempt from the regulation

Summary of internal discussions after briefing:

* ISMP and CDPHL have brainstormed list of recommendations to suggest regarding alcohol component of regulations.  These discussion will continue.
* EHD (Food Safety) discussed that there would be value in ensuring that PHIs have necessary background information about calories and the importance of menu labeling as a healthy eating strategy for population health.  It was suggested that if the province does not provide this in the provincial tools and training, then SMDHU may want to enhance this component locally for the training to PHIs.  Also agreed to continue to keep each other informed as respective groups and contacts learn more details in order to determine if provincial materials will be sufficient or if internal support is required.
* HP&C - Media (J. Challis) has been informed that there might be provincial support for public education, but no details have been shared.