

January 26, 2015

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans

What Are the Dietary Guidelines for Americans?

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGA) are federally developed food-based recommendations for Americans aged two and older, designed to promote health and prevent disease—a guidance on *what* and *how much* to eat.

The DGA form the basis of federal nutrition policy, education, outreach, and food assistance programs. They provide the scientific basis for government recommendations and are used in the development of educational materials, messages, tools, and programs to communicate healthy eating and physical activity information to the public.

All Federal dietary guidance for the public must be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines.

The DGA are statutorily mandated under the 1990 National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act (P.L. 101-445, Title III, Section 301 [7 U.S.C. 5341]).

They are reviewed, updated, and published every five years in a joint effort between the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Agriculture (USDA). The *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* is the most recent version of the policy document, and a new edition is to be published in the fall of 2015.

The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee

In the first stage of DGA development, a Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) is chartered following Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) guidelines. In the fall of 2012, an announcement was published in the *Federal Register* seeking public nominations for the establishment of the DGAC for the 2015 guidelines (see **Figure 1**, Phase 1).

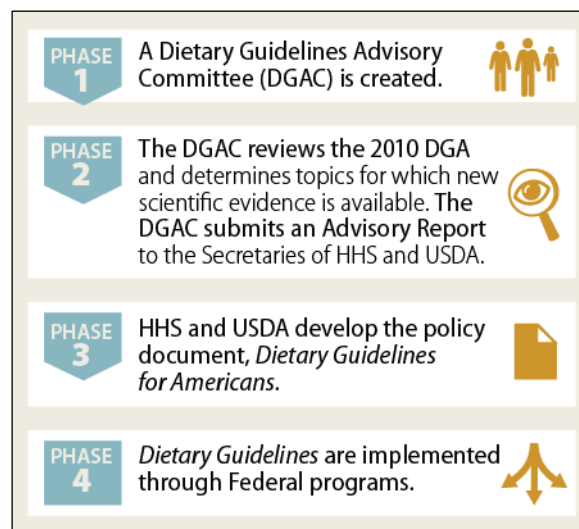
The committee is composed of nationally recognized experts in the fields of human nutrition and chronic disease prevention. DGAC members are non-federal employees who are classified as special government employees (SGEs) for the duration of their appointment. Following committee selection, a notice listing appointed members is published in the *Federal Register*.

During the development of the Dietary Guidelines, the DGAC holds a series of public meetings to review and discuss scientific evidence to support recommendations.

Meeting information is announced in the *Federal Register* at least 15 days prior to the meeting.

There were seven DGAC meetings during the development of the 2015 guidelines, all of which were open to the public via webcast technology. Federal agencies and the public may submit comments electronically throughout the deliberation process (comment period closed December 30, 2014).

Figure 1. The 2015 DGA Process: From Start to Finish



Source: Figure created by CRS based on information from USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion.

The DGAC Report

The DGAC uses systematic reviews, data analyses, and/or food pattern modeling analyses, as well as scientific evidence-based reports, input from guest speakers, and public comments to inform revision of existing recommendations or suggest new guidance. The DGAC also relies on the Nutrition Evidence Library (NEL), which was established by the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) to objectively review, evaluate, and synthesize research to answer nutrition and health questions.

When developing recommendations, the committee considers the existing Dietary Guidelines and examines how those recommendations compare to food consumption data. Based on those considerations, the DGAC may make certain recommendations (e.g., “Increase fruit and vegetable intake” or “Reduce intake of calories from solid fats and added sugars”).

The DGAC then presents its recommendations in a scientific report to the Secretaries of HHS and USDA for use in updating the official *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (see **Figure 1**, Phase 2). The DGAC Report is published in the *Federal Register* and made available to the

public for comment. The Secretaries consider the DGAC's scientific recommendations, as well as comments from federal agencies and the public, in the development of the final policy document.

DGA Implementation—Impact on Federal Programs

Agencies within HHS and USDA rely on DGA policy recommendations to make updates and changes to various nutrition programs.

Programs Within HHS

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) implements programs that provide resources based on the DGA.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers aspects of the DGA in food and nutrition labeling initiatives.
- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and its agencies produce several consumer initiatives to promote principles of the DGA.
- The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP/HHS) implements Healthy People 2020, whose objectives on nutrition and weight status provide a mechanism to measure the nation's progress toward implementing DGA recommendations.
- Other HHS agencies, including the Administration on Community Living (ACL), the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA), the Indian Health Service (IHS), and the Office on Women's Health (OWH), also have nutrition and health education programs based on the DGA.

Programs Within USDA

- The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) nutrition assistance programs use the DGA to adjust food benefits for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) implements the DGA through nutrition labeling and food safety education programs.
- The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) uses the DGA as the nutrition basis for the USDA Food Plans used for SNAP allotments, food allowances for the military, and setting child support and foster care guidelines.
- Other USDA agencies, including the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS), and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), use the DGA to guide decisions on food and/or food purchasing.

Timeline: 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Development

Fall 2012/Winter 2013

- HHS and USDA solicited nominations for the DGAC

Spring/Summer 2013

- DGAC were appointed
- Request for public comments initiated
- Work groups established to identify topic areas
- DGAC held its first public meeting on June 13-14, 2013

Fall 2013/Winter 2014

- Subcommittees established to begin reviews of current scientific evidence
- DGAC held its second public meeting on January 13-14, 2014
- DGAC held its third public meeting on March 14, 2014

Spring/Summer 2014

- DGAC reviews current scientific evidence
- DGAC held its fourth public meeting on July 17-18, 2014

Fall 2014/Winter 2015

- DGAC held its fifth public meeting on September 16-17, 2014
- DGAC held its sixth public meeting on November 7, 2014
- DGAC held its seventh public meeting on December 15, 2014
- DGAC to issue report to the Secretaries of HHS and USDA
- DGAC report to be published and made available to public for comment

Winter/Spring/Summer 2015

- HHS and USDA to consider DGAC's scientific recommendations, as well as public and agency comments
- Departments to prepare for the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* policy document

Fall 2015

- HHS and USDA to jointly publish and release the 8th edition of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

Agata Dabrowska, Analyst in Health Policy

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