

Activity 4.1

Policies reflect values

Policy can be supportive when it is made with the people whose lives are affected by it. This is because it will better reflect their values and experiences.

This is how one person put it: “They may say, ‘Well, it’s our policy.’ Well that policy didn’t come down from god almighty. Man made the policy so if man made the policy then man can break this policy...”

Policies are guides that can help you make choices. Think about your own personal policies—for example, your policy might be to eat locally produced food. If you go out to eat, your policy would be to eat at the local diner rather than at a fast food chain. If another person makes a choice that’s different from yours, you might be tempted to make judgments about their policy. But each person’s policies are based on their own values, experiences and life circumstances. Some people may not be able to choose the local diner because it is too far away and they have to walk—the fast food chain is closest. Others may not have the choice — they may not even have enough money to go out to eat.

Cover up the bulleted text in the bottom right hand corner of the page. While reading through Charlene’s story, think about what policies and values are at play. Uncover the rest of the text and compare your analysis with the policy analysis provided (in the bulleted text).

Charlene’s Story

Charlene went to her local church to ask for a food voucher and was given one worth \$50. She had asked for the food voucher so she could throw her son a birthday party.

She went to her local grocery store and picked up several items, including hotdogs, chips, pop, and a cake mix. The cashier rang the items through, but when Charlene presented her food voucher to pay for the items the cashier told her that if she was desperate enough to get a food voucher then she should be using it to buy better foods like fruits and vegetables. The cashier told her to go put the junk back. Charlene was embarrassed but was used to being treated like this. She listened to the cashier and returned the food items for more nutritious ones. She left the store in shame and tried to figure out how she would go home and explain to her son that he wouldn’t have a birthday party this year—she didn’t have the money.

- Charlene’s church had a policy to provide vouchers to individuals who ask for assistance.
- Charlene’s personal policy was to celebrate her child’s birthday with a party.
- Government social and economic policies did not ensure Charlene had money to buy the food needed to feed her family.
- The grocery store lacked a policy to ensure cashiers had proper sensitivity training.
- The store clerk made assumptions and had personal judgments of those who used vouchers.

This story was shared by one of the partners in the NSNC/AHPRC Participatory Food Costing Project.