



Attention Employers:



**Increase Success in the Workplace
for the Employee with Prader-Willi Syndrome:
Limit Access to Food**



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For most if not all individuals with Prader-Willi Syndrome (PWS), having food accessible in the workplace will impede their ability to concentrate and perform the task at hand because their mind will be more focused upon how to obtain that food item. To maximize performance and minimize behavioral problems, employers must control access to food items throughout the worksite. For most worksites, it is realistic and manageable to make relatively minor changes to accommodate the employee with PWS in order to help him be a productive, valued and valuable employee.

Prader-Willi Syndrome is a serious medical disorder that interferes with the body's appetite-control centers. Individuals with PWS do not recognize feeling satiated or "full" after they eat. The signals to the brain continuously and relentlessly drive someone with PWS to seek out and eat more food. People with Prader-Willi Syndrome metabolize their food at generally half the rate their peers do, so someone with PWS can easily gain weight at a tremendous rate on just a few extra calories. In addition, *people with PWS can experience severe gastric illnesses which can, particularly after over- or binge eating, lead to life-threatening conditions (thinner individuals may be at even greater risk).*

Keeping food items out of sight and inaccessible will help reduce behavioral problems in the workplace. It must be understood that for the individual with Prader-Willi Syndrome there is no "behavior modification" or "learning" to control oneself in regard to food. It is not realistic to expect that someone with PWS can modify his behavior toward taking the bag of chips or eating others' lunches if that food is available to him no matter *how* many tokens or prizes incentivize the person not to take food. While the individual with PWS may be able to manage his behavior for a day or even a week or two, this does not constitute genuine modified behavior; there will come a day when the person, despite his knowing that he should not, will take that bag of chips or eat other lunches and eat them as quickly as he can, thus also creating a choking risk in addition to putting themselves at risk for severe gastric illness. *Individuals with PWS know they're not supposed to eat "out of bounds" foods; they simply cannot overcome their biochemical urge to eat.*

It is often helpful to someone with PWS to post the day's work schedule, including snack and lunch breaks. Having a concrete schedule to view and refer to can be quite helpful. Keeping employee lunches and other food items in a manager's office or in some other secured area is highly recommended. Limiting access to vending machines and/or limiting access to money that may be used to purchase food items from vending machines, mobile food trucks, local fast-food restaurants, etc. is also highly recommended.

For more information about Prader-Willi Syndrome or to speak with someone about how to organize or manage your worksite to assist your employee with Prader-Willi syndrome, please visit Prader-Willi California Foundation's website at www.pwcf.org or call Prader-Willi California Foundation at 310.372.5053 or toll free within California at 800.400.9994.