

Healthy Beverage Toolkit



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A. Background

Children in the United States are facing an obesity crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents over the past 30 years. The same trends hold true in Washington State, where 23% of 10th graders are overweight or obese. In King County, which is home to about 30% of the state's population, more than half of adults and about one-third of youth under 18 are overweight or obese. Childhood obesity has both immediate and long-term health effects. It increases the risk of diabetes, hypertension, stroke, and depression and has serious implications on children's quality of life and overall well-being as they grow into adulthood.

The Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition (COPC) was established in 2007 to address the childhood obesity epidemic by providing guidance and leadership to decision makers that have the power to change Washington State's physical and social environments. As of July 2014, 52 member organizations have joined our movement to build a healthier generation for Washington State.

For seven years, COPC has made strides both locally and statewide to increase access to healthy foods and beverages in places where we live, work, learn and play. Efforts include:

- improving nutrition standards, physical activity, and access to free, drinkable water in early learning and school settings;
- establishing healthy food and beverage standards in government settings (including healthy vending); and
- encouraging healthy beverage education, healthy food procurement (including healthy vending) and environment change in the businesses and organizations that serve our communities through our Hydrate for Health campaign.

The learnings and successes in this toolkit were made possible by a two-year Community Transformation Grant from the Centers for Disease Control, Public Health-Seattle & King County and Seattle Children's Hospital.



A.1. Using this Handbook

COPC developed this toolkit to support organizations in South King County and beyond in their efforts to create environments where healthy beverages and nutritious foods are the norm. After this introduction, the toolkit is organized into four content areas, as described below.

Section B, “[Addressing Obesity Risk Through Food and Beverage Changes](#),” provides background information on how healthy beverages and foods can help combat the surge in obesity. It is useful for educating others on the importance of championing healthy beverages and foods. Specific facts within this section can also be adapted for your organization’s internal and external communications.

Section C, “[Tools for Changing the Beverage Environment](#),” presents options for investing in policy, systems, and environment (PSE) changes that can help sustain healthy beverage and food efforts long term. It also presents an overview of resources and toolkits created by other organizations to support PSE improvements and provides links to these outside resources. This chapter of the toolkit is the ideal starting place for organizations getting ready to embark on a journey to transform the healthy beverage environment to make the healthy choice the easy choice for employees, patrons, and visitors. There’s always room for improvement; organizations may find that although they have already taken steps to improve their beverage environment, there may be tools and strategies in this section to further increase access to healthy options.

Section D, “[Tools for Education and Communication](#),” presents an array of tips, templates, and samples for weaving together healthy beverage education with communications methods that are useful for reaching employees, patrons, and even the general public. This chapter can be helpful for organizations as they are starting out in their efforts to educate staff and/or patrons about healthy beverages. It is also useful for organizations that have already begun to transform their beverage environment and are ready to communicate about the changes, educate people about the reasons for the changes, and spread the word about their exciting successes.

Throughout this toolkit, you will find embedded links to allow you to quickly navigate to the tools that will be most useful to you. Other hyperlinks will bring you to web-based resources created by other organizations.

A.2. Healthy Beverage Programming: Where to Start

The COPC recognizes that the various organizations using this toolkit will be at a different spot on the spectrum of healthy beverage programming. For that reason, we expect that toolkit users will pick and choose the tools that are useful to them in a given moment.

The focus of this toolkit is on healthy beverages given the significant role the consumption of sugary beverages plays in the obesity epidemic. However, we encourage organizations to include healthy foods in whatever programming they adopt, as doing so will further enhance the overarching objective of preventing obesity and increasing the health and well-being of all. Many of the tools in this toolkit can easily be tailored and expanded to include healthy food options.

In addition, this toolkit is not intended to be a one-size-fits-all template for creating an organization-wide healthy food and beverage environment. Rather, the purpose of this handbook is to present a variety of useful resources to help organizations and institutions establish and maintain their program, including educating their employees, patrons, and visitors on the importance of making healthy food and beverage choices.

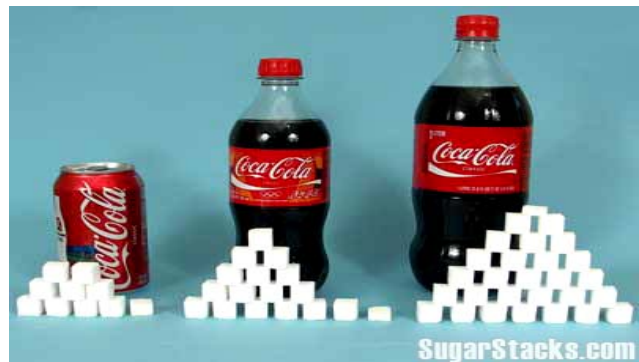
Due to the differing approaches to creating a workplace or organization-wide healthy food and beverage environment, handbook users should note that templates and other resources will require a level of adaptation or customization to be most useful for your organization's specific needs. Workplace and organization-wide healthy food and beverage environments come in many shapes and sizes, and this handbook is intended to help your organization achieve its own customized goals and objectives for supporting your employees, patrons, and visitors' health and well-being.

B. Addressing Obesity Risk Through Food and Beverage Changes

B.1. Sugary Beverages: A Leading Culprit in the Obesity Surge

Sugary drinks are a major contributor to the obesity epidemic. Over the past 40 years, sugary drink portion sizes have grown larger and larger. In the 1950s, soft drink bottles came in a standard 6.5-ounce bottle. Today, 12-ounce cans, 20-ounce bottles, and 1.25-liter bottles (equivalent to 42 ounces, or nearly 7 times the size of a 1950s bottle) are the norm.

While sodas are decreasing in popularity among some demographic groups, other sugary drinks are gaining in popularity – including vitamin waters, energy drinks, sweetened teas, fruit juices, and sugary coffee beverages. Such beverages are often labeled to give the impression that they are healthy, but in reality they are filled with sugar. Unlike unhealthy foods, sugary drinks do not make people feel full. This lack of satiety coupled with sugar's tendency to create an unquenchable craving for more sugar makes it hard for people to have just one. About half of people in the U.S. drink at least one sugary beverage a day, and at least 5% drink the equivalent of four cans of soda.



Sugar intake grows as beverage portions expand.

Rates of sugary drink consumption are higher among low-income and diverse communities. Our youth are also particularly vulnerable. For example, at 226 calories per day, sugary drinks are the biggest source of calories in American teenagers' diets (beating out pizza).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the link between sugary beverage and serious health conditions like obesity and diabetes. Increasing sugary beverage consumption by one 12-ounce serving per day has shown to cause weight gain in both adults and children. One study found that each additional 12-ounce soda children drank each day increased their odds of becoming obese by 60%. Just as sugary drinks increase obesity risk among children, adults who drink one or more sugary drinks a day are 27% more likely to be overweight or obese. There is hope, though: studies have also shown that both children and adults can lose weight by cutting back on sugary beverages.



Beverage companies target young people

While sugary beverages have gained in popularity and eroded people's health, processed foods laden with sugar and salt have also overtaken their homemade healthy counterparts. Both trends are in large part due to the processed food and beverage

industries' aggressive strategy of marketing directly to children. A report by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission reveals that beverage companies in the U.S. spent about \$3.2 billion to market carbonated beverages in 2006. Sadly, roughly half a billion of these marketing dollars were targeted directly at young people between the ages of 2 and 17.

With children's diets consisting of sugary beverages and high-salt, high-fat processed foods, it comes as no surprise that industry experts believe that children today may be the first generation to have a lower life expectancy than their parents. However, together we can turn the tide. Adults can set an example for the next generation by drinking fewer sugary drinks and committing to healthier choices.

B.2. The Role of Organizations in Combating Obesity

Most Americans spend a significant portion of their waking hours away from home at places of work, school, play, and worship. The options available at these places largely determine what we consume, particularly beverages. Unfortunately, unhealthy beverages and snacks have become the most widely available, cheaper, and easier choice. Organizations can be leaders in their community in combating obesity by making changes in their working environments and taking steps to make healthy options more available for their employees, visitors, and patrons.

In 2012 COPC launched an effort to equip Seattle/King County organizations to embrace changes in their working environments. These transformations make healthy food and beverage choices the easy choice for staff, visitors, and patrons. Local government agencies, community-based organizations, entertainment venues, faith-based organizations, housing, hospitals, and businesses have all worked toward these improvements. We have seen that in making positive and systematic changes at the workplace and organizational level, organizations can inspire healthy choices by individuals, families, and communities.

The benefits of these efforts are widespread and tangible in the workplace and the community. Increased intake of healthy foods at work results in improved focus, concentration, energy, morale, and overall health. In addition, organizations that have increased the accessibility and affordability of non-sugar-sweetened beverages and healthy snack options have proven it is possible to maintain or even increase food and beverage revenues. Moreover, the employees, patrons, and visitors of organizations committed to a healthy food and beverage environment overall report a greater sense of well-being and happiness, which extends to the health and happiness of their families, and helps create communities where the healthy choice is the easy choice.



We can make a difference by making the healthy choice the easy choice

C. Tools for Changing the Beverage Environment

We all have the opportunity to be a part of the solution when it comes to the obesity epidemic. Individuals' health is influenced by where they work, live, learn, and play. These environments need to be supportive of healthful actions. The choices we make about our health are not always rational, logical, or based on what is best for us. All of us from time to time have ignored what we know to be good for us, such as quitting smoking, getting more exercise, eating better, getting more sleep, and going to the doctor. When our surroundings make the healthy choice the easy choice, we are more likely to make that choice, which has direct benefits to individuals, organizations, and the community. By creating a healthy environment, which may include offering both healthy beverages and foods, organizations can take a proactive and leading role in inspiring healthy choices. These endeavors can ripple into establishing healthy habits and behaviors over the long-run.

C.1. The Significance of Making Policy, System, and Environmental Changes

This toolkit emphasizes a policy, system, and environmental (PSE) approach for developing, implementing, and maintaining an organization-wide healthy beverage environment. A PSE approach creates the scaffolding that supports and reinforces program activities. By taking this approach, your organization's commitment to and efforts toward encouraging healthy beverage choices will have a greater chance of sustaining over the long run. That is because the PSE framework will establish the infrastructure for engaging leadership and legitimizing your program.

Establishing PSE changes creates the infrastructure for making affordable healthy options available for your employees and visitors, thereby making healthy choices within reach. Moreover, setting an example of healthy institutional policies and practices can influence other organizations in King County and throughout Washington state.

C.1.2. Assessing Where You Are

[Beverage Environment Assessment Tool](#)

Before getting started on PSE changes, an important first step is to assess where your organization is on the spectrum of healthy beverage programming. Many organizations, large or small, have little concept of what beverages are being sold or where water access points are in the organization. [This beverage environment assessment tool](#) is a great starting point, as it will guide your organization through a four-step process in determining how and where to focus your efforts in creating or enhancing your organization's healthy beverage environment. After you have conducted this assessment, you will be ready to make the PSE changes that are best for your organization. Some examples are described in the tables on the following pages. Also, consider [surveying](#) staff to gauge whether or not they think your organization is lacking in healthy options.

C.1.3. Suggestions for Making PSE Changes

The following suggested PSE changes can help ensure organizational efforts to change the food and beverage environment are sustainable in the long term.

Policy Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healthy Beverage Policy: Adopt a healthy beverage policy that states what types of drinks can be sold or made available within your organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healthy Vending Policy: Adopt a Healthy Vending policy that states what types of beverages and foods can be sold or made available within your organization and designates what percentage of vending options must be healthy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healthy Meetings/Events Policy: Provide only water, low and non-fat milk, diet drinks, unsweetened coffee or tea, and 8-ounce portions of 100% fruit and/or vegetable juice at all organizational meetings, functions, conferences and parties.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organization-wide Wellness Policy: This type of policy is a comprehensive, organization-level approach that could include a healthy beverage policy, healthy vending policy, healthy meetings/events policy, and other initiatives to support wellness in the worksite such as incentives for exercise and movement.

System Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set Up Training Protocols: Implement training protocols for management or vendors so they understand any new healthy beverage policies your organization adopts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say “No” to Unhealthy Marketing: Phase out corporate sponsorships, advertisements, endorsements, and free giveaways from unhealthy food and beverage companies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit to Procurement Changes: Make systematic changes to your procurement contracts with vendors – including vending machine suppliers, cafeteria suppliers, and event caterers – to ensure that a specified percentage of healthy beverages are made available.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initiate Cultural Changes Through Taste Tests, Pledges and Contests: New products don’t always sell themselves – a taste test for employees or patrons is a fun way to introduce a new healthy beverage product, or to demonstrate that tap water can be just as tasty as bottled water. Fun and engaging challenges are also a great way to initiate systematic cultural shifts by encouraging employees, visitors, and patrons to get involved and support each other in their commitment to make healthy choices. Healthy beverage pledges could include a commitment to be soda-free or have no sugary drinks for 30 days. Contests could include best healthy beverage recipe contest or funkiest water bottle contest with judges and prizes and inter-department competitions where the department with the most employees that pledge soda free wins.

Environmental Changes

- **Address the “4Ps”:** Be sure to include the following four key elements when making healthy beverage environment changes.
 1. **Products:** Make more healthy beverage products and drinking water available.
 2. **Pricing:** Price water and other healthy beverages competitively with unhealthy beverages.
 3. **Placement:** Place healthy beverages at eye-level in vending machines, cafeterias, and break rooms. Ensure that drinking water is easily accessible near work and meeting spaces.
 4. **Promotion:** Market and promote healthy products as much or more than unhealthy products.
- **Create Easy Access to Water:** Ensure that healthy options are readily available. Making this type of change can include fixing or installing water stations where employees and visitors can easily refill water bottles on site. Post clear signage in and around your building directing people to the location of water fountains and encouraging people to bring and refill their own bottles for free.
- **Create Easy Access to Healthy Beverages and Snacks:** Have vending machines stocked with healthy beverages and snacks that are prominently placed at eye level. Create a special and prominently located section in your cafeteria featuring healthy food and beverage options. Ensure that healthy snacks and meals are available at staff meetings and any organization events. Post signage throughout your building reminding your employees and visitors that healthy and affordable options are available and highlighting the benefits of making healthy choices.
- **Educate by Having Informational Materials Readily Available:** Help educate your employees, visitors, and patrons by distributing information about your healthy beverage environment and the benefits of choosing healthy beverages over sugary drinks. (See links to educational information in Section B.2.)

C.2. Tools and Resources for Making PSE Changes

The following Tools for Change provide are examples of policies and guidelines to help your organization think through the PSE changes that will most effectively fit your organization.

C.2.1. Policy Guidelines and Samples

[Healthy Guidelines for Meetings, Trainings, and Events](#)

- Guidelines developed by Seattle & King County Public Health that have been adopted by a variety of cities in King County, including Burien, Federal Way, Redmond, and Snoqualmie.
- Seattle & King County Public Health has also put together a [healthy meetings and events resource page with suggested downloadable shopping lists](#) at popular stores.

[Healthy Meetings Toolkit](#)

- Toolkit developed by Center for Science and the Public Interest to assist organizations in developing and implementing healthy meetings and events policies.

[Policy Options to Reduce Overconsumption of Sugary Drinks](#)

- Information on policy changes by sector that can lead to reduction in sugary drink consumption from Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity..

[Healthy Beverage Toolkit and Sample Wellness Policies](#)

- Resources from Santa Clara County Public Health and Bay Area Nutrition & Physical Activity Collaborative (BANPAC) for creating a healthier workplace.
- Includes best practices, sample policies, and more.

[Policies to Improve the Beverage Environment: Shifting Availability and Expectations by Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative](#)

- This report provides an overview of successful Healthy Beverage Policies adopted by organizations in the Northern California Bay Area.
- According to this report, key components of a healthy beverage policy include:
 - Eliminating all beverages with added sugar, whether provided at no cost or sold.
 - Limit portion sizes for fruit or vegetable-based beverages that contain any calories.
 - Ensure access to free, safe drinking water.
 - Require beverage vendor contracts to specify that all beverages purchased or provided meet the beverage standards.
 - Include an implementation and monitoring plan.

[Sample Organization Wellness Policy](#)

- Sample organization wide food and beverage wellness policy from the Low Income Housing Institute.

C.2.2. Vending Guidelines and Standards

[King County Board of Health's Healthy Vending Guidelines](#)

- The goal of the King County Healthy Vending Guidelines is to make it easier for people to drink water and eat nutrient-rich whole food like:
 - Vegetables: baby carrots, celery sticks
 - Fruits: apples, oranges, pears, bananas
 - Whole grains with low sodium: granola bars, crackers, pretzels
 - Nuts & seeds: trail mix, peanuts, almonds
 - Fat-free & low-fat dairy: yogurt, cheese

- Lean meats, fish & beans with low sodium: beef jerky, tuna, hummus
- The guidelines are also intended to help you avoid eating unhealthy food and beverages with added sugars, saturated and trans fat, refined grains and sodium, like, candy, chips, cookies, fried foods, soda and energy drinks.

[King County Healthy Vending Implementation Toolkit](#)

- In April 2011, the King County Board of Health adopted the King County Healthy Vending Guidelines to encourage organizations to offer healthy food and beverages in their vending machines. Public Health – Seattle & King County staff then developed this toolkit to support organizations that would like to implement the King County Healthy Vending Guidelines.
- This Toolkit provides a step-by-step process to walk your organization through (1) getting an organizational commitment, (2) building a leadership team, (3) gathering information, (4) developing an implementation plan, (5) implementing the change and (6) conducting evaluation.
- It is embedded with sample policies, guidelines, educational presentations, and communication materials.
- We also recommend that you visit [COPC's healthy vending resource page](#), which builds off of the implementation toolkit and provides quick reference materials, as well as sample product lists. On this page, you will also find a sample [survey](#) and [taste test tool](#) for staff.

Other [Model Vending Standards](#)

- These vending standards were developed by the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity to provide a model for municipal, state, and federal government leased or operated vending machines or vending machines on public property.
- The standards also could be used by hospitals, private workplaces, and others to support the health of their employees or visitors.
- They include nutrition standards, point of purchase calorie labeling requirements and tips for successfully implementing vending standards.

[King County Healthy Vending Examples](#)

- Compilation of vending success stories in King County.

[Sample Vending Request for Proposal](#)

- This is an example of a robust request for proposal of a vending machine concessionaire to install and operate beverage and snack machines used by the Seattle Housing Authority.
- It requires that the selected Concessionaire shall be responsible for stocking, at a minimum, fifty percent (50%) of the products in each SHA facility with healthy product alternatives.

[Study Supporting Healthy Vending Profitability](#)

- A new study of healthier vending in Chicago parks found nearly 90% of Chicago park-goers like the healthier options, and healthier snacks boosted average monthly per-machine sales from \$84 to \$371.

D. Tools for Education and Communication

D.1. The Importance of Education and Other Communications

Awareness is the first step toward making positive change. Efforts your organization takes to educate your employees and visitors of the benefits of healthy beverages and foods will have a profound impact on inspiring healthy changes. However, establishing a solid infrastructure through implementing policy, system, and environmental (PSE) changes, as set forth in the previous chapter of this handbook, is fundamental to cultivating healthy social norms and creating mechanisms to support lasting change. Strong and persuasive education and communication strategies are essential to ensure that any PSE changes your organization implements will be successful over the long run.

Ideally, education and communication strategies should include two key awareness-building messages:

1. the PSE changes your organization makes in a way that helps your employees and visitors enthusiastically buy-in to them; and
2. the overall health, social, and economic benefits of making healthy changes for individuals, families, your organization, and the community as a whole.

If your organization is not in a position to undertake PSE changes right away, we encourage you to use the education and communication tools in this section to build general awareness about the pitfalls of sugary drinks and encourage your employees and visitors to make healthy choices.

D.2. Tools and Resources for Education and Communication

The following resources are full of facts and information on the harmful effects of sugary drinks and the benefits of healthy beverages and foods. You can use these resources to create educational materials to distribute to your employees and visitors. They may also be used to help guide and inform your organization's development and implementation of PSE changes. In addition, the facts and information in these resources can be used to help enhance and bolster your organization's communications about your commitment to a healthy beverage environment and the overall benefits of healthy choices through, for example, newsletters, op-eds, and social media, which are presented in [Section D.2.3](#).

D.2.1. Education Resources

[Recommendations for Healthy Beverages](#)

- Recommendations provided Robert Wood Johnson Foundation by age group with a range of options.

[Sugary Drinks 101](#)

- Information from COPC on sugary drinks and why they are bad for your health.

[Hydrate Healthy: A Case for Healthy Beverage Environment](#)

- Support for why your organization should make healthy drink choices easy for staff and the people you serve.

[Rethink Your Drink: Better Beverage Choices Made Easy](#)

- Tips and information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on how to read nutrition labels, amount of calories in popular drinks and easy substitutions to reduce calories.

[Workplace Discussion Guide](#)

- A step-by-step guide provided by BANPAC on how to conduct a discussion about the amount of sugar in popular drinks and helpful ideas for living a low sugar lifestyle.
- Also available in Spanish.

[Water: Meeting Your Daily Needs](#)

- Information from the CDC about the health benefits of water and ways to increase how much you drink.

[Fresh Fruit-Infused Water Recipes](#)

- Fruit infused water (“spa water”) recipes from the Bay Area Nutrition & Physical Activity Collaborative (BANPAC). Make a batch and enjoy at work, meetings, and events.

[Hydrate Healthy Family Plan](#)

- Steps your family can take to make healthier drink choices and to create a healthier lifestyle.

[One Family Works Off a Bottle of Soda](#)

- Watch how one family realizes the amount of exercise it takes to work off a bottle of soda.

[Team Nutrition: Wellness Tips for Young Children](#)

- Information provided by U. S. Department of Agriculture for increasing accessibility of water to children and tips for encouraging children to drink more water.

D.2.2. Posters, Collateral, and Images

Healthy Vending Promotional Posters

- This link provides a set of professional promotional posters prepared by the Center for Science in the Public Interest to coincide with any healthy vending policy your organization implements.
- Each poster includes educational information on the importance of choosing healthy beverages and snacks.
- Also, check out COPC's healthy foods and beverages vending posters on our [vending resource page](#).



Seattle/King County Posters

- “You Just Ate 26 Packs of Sugar” poster: shows there are 26 packs of sugar in a bottle of soda. Available in four versions for different audiences and in various languages.
- Rethink Your Drink Traffic Light Poster: details, in an easy to understand traffic light format, which drinks should be consumed in moderation, not at all or frequently.



Images

- Pictures help bring to life education and communication materials!
- A set of images is presented in the [social media tools](#) section of this toolkit. Your organization may use these and other images to enhance any education and communication materials you create around healthy beverages and foods.
- More free images can be found through searches on [Creative Commons](#) (particularly Google Images, Flickr, and Pixabay).
- We also encourage you to take your own photos to personalize your education and communication efforts.

[You Wouldn't Pour Your Kid a Glass of Sugar](#) Video

- Public Health Seattle & King County's educational video about sugary drinks.

D.2.3. Communication Resources

The following resources provide tips, templates, and samples of newsletters, op-ed articles, and social media posts to assist you in employing an effective communications strategy to share and promote your organization's commitment to a healthy beverage environment.

Newsletter/e-Newsletter Articles and Blog Posts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tips for developing newsletter/e-newsletter articles and blogs• Customizable newsletter/blog template (internal audience)• Customizable newsletter/blog template (external audience)• Sample newsletter articles/blogs
Op-Ed Article
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tips for developing an op-ed• Customizable op-ed template• Sample op-ed
Social Media Posts (Facebook, Twitter)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tips for developing effective social media posts• Customizable social media posts template

Tips for Developing Newsletter/e-Newsletter Articles and Blogs

Electronic and printed newsletter articles and blogs are an effective way to help spread the news of the institutional changes and commitments your organization makes. They also provide an excellent opportunity to educate your staff, visitors, and patrons about the benefits of making healthy food and beverage choices. The tips below will ensure a successful message, whether it is introducing a new organization policy, availability of better drinking water sources, new healthy beverages and snacks in the break room, a healthy beverage pledge or contest, reporting personal or organization-wide successes, or other unique healthy beverage news will be meaningful to your audiences.

Know Your Audience

The first step is identifying your readers and tailoring your message accordingly. When writing an internal newsletter, consider the needs and interests of your employees, including their desire for a quick snack or “pick me up” to get them through a busy day. For external newsletters, consider why your commitment to a healthy beverage environment should matter to your visitors and patrons.

Keep it Short

Whether it is in print or electronic form, newsletter articles should be short to increase the likelihood your intended audience will take the time to read them. Ideally, they should be 3 or 4 paragraphs with 3 to 4 sentences each, or a total of about 150 to 250 words.

Make it Newsworthy

Why now? Newsletters are meant to cover news. Newsworthiness could include your organization’s recent adoption of a new policy. It could also include a recent success story of one of your employees or patrons.

Start With a Catchy Headline

A good headline is vital to capturing the attention of the reader. Keep it short, use the active voice, and include a verb.

Follow with an Informative Lead

Start with your most interesting and newsworthy information. It’s helpful to try to answer as many of the 5 W and 1 H questions as possible in the first few sentences (i.e., Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?). Remember, this is a news article, so you want to captivate your audience early and hook them into reading the entire article.

Include Images

Images speak louder than words. Photos with captions are an effective way to captivate your audience and get your message through, especially for busy, distracted, or low-literacy readers.

Make It Personal and Active

Include anecdotes or quotes from your employees or patrons to help bring your article to life and personalize it. Also, be sure to use the active voice.

Finish With A Call to Action

Newsletters also function as a marketing tool. Like any marketing material, you want to leave your readers with a clear call to action.

Customizable Newsletter Template (Employee Audience)

Making Healthy Choices Just Got Easier!

[Name of Organization] is thrilled to announce our commitment to creating a healthier working environment. [Description of your new policy, for example: “Effective immediately, you’ll see more choices for affordable healthy beverages prominently displayed, including 100% fruit and vegetable juices, water, non/low-fat milk, and unsweetened tea. You will also see healthier food choices with more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free/low-fat dairy products, and lower amounts of saturated and trans fats, added sugars, and sodium.”]

Sugary drinks are a leading cause of obesity today. Adults who drink one or more sugary drinks a day are 27% more likely to be overweight or obese. Being overweight or obese increases one’s risk of diabetes, hypertension, stroke, and depression. There’s hope, though! Studies also show that reducing sugary drinks can lead to weight loss.

Making healthy choices accessible and affordable benefits each of us and our organization as a whole. Consuming healthy food and beverages at work improves energy levels, concentration and job satisfaction, and reduces illness and fatigue. In other words, you’ll feel better! In addition, for every \$1 an organization spends on employee wellness programs it saves \$3.27 in medical costs.

[Describe how your new policy counteracts the obesity epidemic, for example: “The good news is that we now have options here at [your organization], so choosing tasty healthy drinks and snacks over their sugary counterparts is now an easier choice to make.”]

Join us in our commitment to health and happiness [describe what they can do to take part, for example: “by choosing a healthy beverage and snack the next time you visit the vending machines.”]

You can try healthier options at home. Test out these refreshing, [healthy beverage recipes](#).

Customizable Newsletter Template (Patron or Visitor Audience)

Making Healthy Choices at [Your organization] Just Got Easier!

We at [Your Organization] are committed to supporting you, as a valued patron and visitor, in your effort to live a healthier and happier life. [Description of your new policy, for example: “Effective immediately, you’ll see more choices for affordable healthy beverages prominently displayed, including fruit and vegetable juices, water, non/low-fat milk, and coffee and tea with no caloric sweeteners. You will also see healthier food choices with more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free/low-fat dairy products and lower amounts of saturated and trans-fats, added sugars, and sodium.”]

We are pleased to take a lead in creating a healthy environment for all of us. The need for our community to work together in making affordable healthy beverage and food choices available has never been more urgent. Sugary drinks are a leading cause of obesity today. Adults who drink one or more sugary drinks a day are 27% more likely to be overweight or obese. Children are also impacted. Each additional 8 oz of soda increases a child’s risk of obesity by 60%. Moreover, being overweight or obese increases one’s risk of diabetes, hypertension, stroke, and depression.

We are making a shift for the better. Join us in supporting health and longevity [describe what they can do to take part, for example: “by choosing a healthy beverage the next time you visit our vending machines.”] Look for the posters pointing you to the new, healthy options in the machines and come to our taste test on X date.

Sample Newsletter Articles and Blog Posts

The links in the table below will bring you to sample newsletters articles and blog posts that other organizations have written on the topic of healthy beverages.

<i>Hydration Stations Start a Water-Drinking Movement in Washington</i>
Article by Community Commons on Hydration Stations in Schools.
<i>Mission: Nutrition Brings Healthier Food and Drink Options to Seattle Children's</i>
Article by Seattle Children's Hospital on Its No Sugary Drink Policy
<i>Wellbody Recipe: Making Water Interesting</i>
Blog post by Pacific Science Center on the adverse affects of sugary drinks which includes recipes for adding natural flavor to water.
<i>12 Tips to Drink 8 Cups of Water a Day</i>
Article by City of Kent providing tips for drinking more water.

Tips for Developing an Op-Ed



An opinion editorial or “op-ed” is an excellent way to promote your organization’s successes and commitment to a healthy beverage environment and encourage other leaders to do the same. You’ll earn recognition for your organization while also educating the public on the importance of making healthier food and beverage choices available at an institutional level. If you can express yourself clearly and persuasively, you can influence other individuals and organizations and continue to help shape public policy.

Timing

It is best if you can link the timing of your op-ed to something happening in the news. Examples include the release of a new scientific study regarding obesity; news reports on specific initiatives; or policy measures taken on a state or national level related to sugary beverages (such as “sugar taxes”). National awareness observation dates also provide a great hook. These include Healthy Weight Week in January, National Nutrition Month in March, Health Care Human Resources Week in March, Public Health Week in April, World Health Day on April 7, Employee Health and Fitness Month in May, Community Health Improvement Week in June, and Childhood Obesity Awareness Month in September. Or, you can link your story to the winter holiday season highlighting the importance of helping individuals make healthier choices through the holidays and set positive intentions for the New Year.

Keep it Short

Limit the article to 750 words or less. Newspapers have limited space, and editors don’t have time to make cuts on long submissions. Letters to editors, which are shorter versions of an op-ed, should be even shorter (100 to 150 words is the norm, but check with your local newspaper).

Keep it Simple and Active

Make it easy for your readers to flow through your article by keeping your sentences short and simple, and limit your paragraphs to just two or three sentences. Avoid the use of jargon and too many acronyms, as these will intimidate the reader. Use the active voice, such as “I hope . . .” vs. “It is hoped that . . .” to make your opinion clear and concise.

Identify Who Your Audience Is and Why They Should Care

It is essential that you know who you are writing to and tailor your message to them. Ask yourself, “Why should they care?” Frame your message in a way that will appeal to your readers’ self-interest, including helping them and their children become healthier and happier and protecting them from diabetes and obesity. If your audience is broad, try not to make any statements or assumptions that would alienate any particular group. If it is a local publication, emphasize your local roots and make a personal connection to the readers: “As a King County resident and tax-payer, I care about the health and well-being of our children and the effectiveness of our health care system.”

Get to the Point

Choose one main message you want to express. Then, frame this message clearly and succinctly in one or two sentences as a strong “lead.” This short introduction will hook your busy reader quickly. The key is to immediately convince the reader it is worth their time to continue reading. As a caveat, don’t spend too much time writing a clever headline, as most newspapers will write their own (especially for letters to the editor).

Personalize It

People tend to resonate more with personal stories than dry facts. Tell the story of your organization, and provide one or two examples of how it has benefited specific employees or patrons. Better yet, tell your personal story, including how your own commitment toward making healthier choices has had a profound benefit in your life. You should certainly include facts and statistics, which will be more compelling when provided in the context of personal stories.

Finish Strong

It's important to end with a summary of your argument in a compelling final paragraph. Oftentimes readers will skim the headline, the first paragraph, and the last paragraph. So be sure the ending reflects a persuasive message. Often writers will tie their concluding phrase to their opening "hook," thereby making a full circle. A call to action serves as another great ending: "Won't you join us ...?"

How to Submit

Most newspapers and publications have guidelines about how they prefer to receive submissions. Usually they provide an email address where you can submit the article. Be sure to include your contact information. It can also be helpful to say whether you have a photo of yourself available and other graphics such as photos and illustrations that might accompany your article.

Customizable Op-Ed Template

[HEADLINE]

Healthy Beverage Choices Take the Fuel Out of Childhood Obesity

By [Your Name]

[LEAD. *Try to add a newsworthy link.*] To effectuate change, we must be the change. [September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month], and there's no better way to promote awareness than to make a commitment to healthier choices at a personal and institutional level.

[FACTS ON PROBLEM] Overconsumption of sugary drinks is one of the leading causes of obesity today. A recent study showed that one in five of King County youth are obese or overweight, and those youth self-reported having drunk two or more sodas on the day they were surveyed. Each additional 8 oz of soda increases a child's risk of obesity by 60%. And it's not just soda – other sugary beverages like energy drinks and vitamin waters are becoming ever more popular.

[PERSONAL STORY. *Provide 2-3 sentences on your personal story about how reducing sugary drinks has benefited your life and/or your children.*]

[ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT – *Provide 2-3 sentences describing the your organization's institutional commitment to change and policies or initiatives you have adopted.*] As the [your title] at [your organization], I aspire to help our employees and patrons reap the same rewards by modeling healthy choices and environments for our children and our greater community. We have recently committed to [describe your organizations changes and/or education programs].

[ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS(ES) – *Provide 1-2 anecdotes of how this initiative has benefited your organization and/or specific employees, and if possible tie into childhood obesity.*]

[FACTS ON SOLUTION] A wealth of scientific evidence shows that increased intake of healthy foods at work results in improved focus, concentration, energy, morale, and overall health. We all know that greater efficiency and morale, not to mention fewer employee sick days, is good for any business or venture. Moreover, organizations that have increased the accessibility and affordability of non-sugar-sweetened beverages have proven it is possible to maintain or even increase beverage revenues. [Your organization] has experienced such measurable benefits as a direct result of our [short name of your initiative(s)]. More importantly, our employees and patrons are expressing a profound sense of greater well-being and happiness, which extends to the health and happiness of their families and communities.

[ENDING – *Bridge to opening message.*] Making healthy choices yourself, and extending them into your workplace or organization through systematic changes can have a profound ripple affect. Together we can curb childhood obesity, by simply being the healthy change one individual and one organization at a time. There's no better time to start than now.

Op-Ed Sample

Put a cap on childhood obesity by putting down the soda bottle

By DORSOL PLANTS
Guest Writer

One of the earliest stories my parents can tell you about my early childhood involves me at an amusement park dropping a gigantic soda and throwing a tantrum. My parents enjoy telling this embarrassing story, but it is actually a pretty typical story out of someone's childhood. Yet how typical is it in our society for kids so young to become soda customers?

It turns out from a recent Rudd Center study that not only is it common, but it has been designed that way. The study analyzed the marketing tactics being used by soda and other high sugar beverage corporations and found that much like tobacco companies just a couple decades ago, they were aiming for low-income and minority families. Unlike Tobacco who has to restrict themselves to ads for adults in cartoon style, soda companies are allowed to market directly to children. And not just any children either, but in some cases the youngest. The Center pointed out in one of their many examples that Latino children age 5-11 saw more ads for soda during TV programming for their age group than their 12-17 year old brothers and sisters did for theirs. Could this be one of the reasons why our country is presently in the middle of an obesity epidemic?

A recent study showed that one in five of King County students are obese or overweight, and those students self-reported having drunk two or more sodas on the day they were surveyed. And it's not just soda — other sugary beverages like energy drinks and vitamin waters are becoming ever more popular.

It is becoming clear that we have a serious problem. Health organizations are no longer the only ones trumpeting the cause. Both retired and active military generals warn that America's youth is no longer fit enough to defend their own country.

None of this is helped large soda corporations continuing work to obscure the effects and contents of their beverages. In addition to the millions spent on marketing to the youngest members of your household, an almost equal amount is being spent on governmental lobbying. This lobbying has enabled them to deflect accountability, including not listing ingredient amounts in their beverages. In this past year, they have also launched an effort to allow soda corporations to change the name of "high-fructose corn syrup" to an abbreviation after fears that using the full name was driving customers away. Perhaps worst of all, as health and fitness program budgets are continually being cut, the soda industry has been able to keep many of its tax loopholes.

Sure, it would be easy to say that it's the parent's responsibility and leave it at that. But really, after all of the marketing and the misinformation, is it really that simple? I don't think that it is. And as a community, we cannot continue to sit idle while our neighbors' health suffers. It's this sentiment that gave birth to the Soda Free Sunday campaign.

Soda Free Sundays is an education and awareness campaign out of the Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition in King County. Originally set to run for six weeks, the campaign has continued to grow as more and more people outside the county become aware of what they or their

kids are drinking. At the heart of this awareness is a simple pledge, a pledge to not drink soda one day out of the week.

Why just one day? Because people really do care about their health, and people would like to live as long and healthy a life as they possibly can. And because experts tell us that successfully changing your lifestyle involves small steps, one at a time. The key is to fight that unspoken urge, that habit that says pizza must come with soda or that has you reaching for that energy drink before you've even opened your eyes in the morning. By just picking one day out of the week to stop — and it doesn't have to be Sunday, but since “Soda Free Sunday” is kind of catchy, it might be easier to remember — you must actively begin to think about the health choices you make.

That is what the Soda Free Sunday campaign is all about: Making sure that instead of drinking our calories, we make healthy drink options more available in our lives. Let's think of soda as a treat again, not the default drink. Won't you join us in taking the pledge?

For more information, visit sodafreesundays.com

Dorsol Plants, a former Cavalry Scout and Iraq War veteran in the U.S. Army, currently works as the campaign coordinator of Soda Free Sundays.

Social Media Tip Sheet



Social media is a great tool for disseminating information and getting the word out about your commitment and promotion of a healthy beverage environment. It can be an incredibly effective marketing tool for maximizing impact by building enthusiasm and creating a following for your organization in the public sphere.

This tip sheet covers general tips for getting your healthy beverage environment messages out on Facebook and Twitter. It does not serve to get you started from scratch. So, if you haven't yet signed up for Facebook and Twitter we highly recommend you do so! Also, social media is a rapidly changing environment, so we advise that you keep up to speed on best practices as they evolve.

“Like” us

Be sure you “like” [Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition](#), as you will then have access to all of our feeds that you can rewrite or share on your Facebook site.

Ask Employees and Friends to “Like” and “Share” Your Posts

Facebook operates by spreading awareness through extensive online social networks. However, your posts are not seen by all of your friends and instead spread via algorithms. Basically, the more your post is shared and liked, the more it will spread and be seen by others both within your network and outside of it. So ask people to like and share liberally.

Acknowledge Your Audience

Remember that Facebook spreads your message to your friends, as well as the public sphere. Ideally, your message should be tailored to your existing patrons as well as prospective patrons and the general public.

Keep Your Posts and Tweets Short

It's best to keep your message short and to the point. Ideally, limit it to 90 characters, or at least add your URL link within the first 90 characters. Twitter has a maximum of 140 characters. You can shorten your URL by using a free URL shortener like bit.ly.

Focus on Images

Facebook pages highlight your story over time. Pictures are more alluring than words and can be helpful to draw in the reader's attention. Ideally upload images at least 300x300. It's best to use bright and active images, including orange and red colors and close-ups of people. Logos are not ideal. You can also upload short videos. The sample social media messages are followed by some images you might find useful. Be sure you have permission to reuse all images that you post.

Include a Call to Action

The best way to help your message go viral is to get people engaged in the conversation. For example, you could create a challenge or ask people to share their favorite healthy beverage.

Engage

Continue to engage in the conversation of your post by replying to comments, asking questions, and continuing to offer updates.

Use #Hashtags

Hashtags use the “number sign” in combination with a word or phrase to create a vast virtual filing system. Using hashtags will allow you to stay tuned and participate in the overall conversation. We encourage you to use the hashtag #hydrateforhealth to build momentum for this campaign.

Use Key Words


Be sure to include key words and phrases like “healthy beverages” or “prevent childhood obesity” so people can find you in a search.


Be Supportive


Sharing and retweeting interesting news stories and other posts or tweets of organizations that are committed to a healthy beverage environment will help build your campaign for a Healthy Beverage Environment.

Customizable Social Media Posts

Campaigns and Challenges

	<p>Join [name of organization] in sharing the gift of health. Get your friends and family to take the soda free challenge – 30 days without soda. Who do you nominate? Pass it on! #hydrateforhealth</p>
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	<p>It's Childhood Obesity Awareness Month [or other designated health promotion day/week/month]. Join [name of organization] in the healthy beverage challenge – 30 days without sugary drinks. Who's in? #hydrateforhealth</p>
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	<p>Enter [name of organization] funky water bottle challenge, and win a [prize]. Bring in your eccentrically personalized water bottle, fill it up at one of our filtered water stations, take a photo, post to instagram or Facebook, and tag us. The winner will be announced [date]. #hydrateforhealth</p>
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The department challenge is on at [name of organization]. Whichever department has the most employees to pledge, and actually be soda-free for the month of [month], wins a [name a prize, such as a catered lunch or free water bottles]. #hydrateforhealth



[#] of [name of organization] employees have pledged to stop drinking sodas. In just 10 days, they feel and look great! Join in by taking the pledge yourself. #hydrateforhealth

Recipe Ideas and Contests



Take the pledge of no more sugary drinks with [name of your organization]. Share your favorite healthy drink recipe! #hydrateforhealth



Who needs artificial flavor and sugar? Just add a twist of lemon and a slice of ginger to your water. It'll quench your thirst and boost your digestion! What's your favorite natural water flavor? #hydrateforhealth

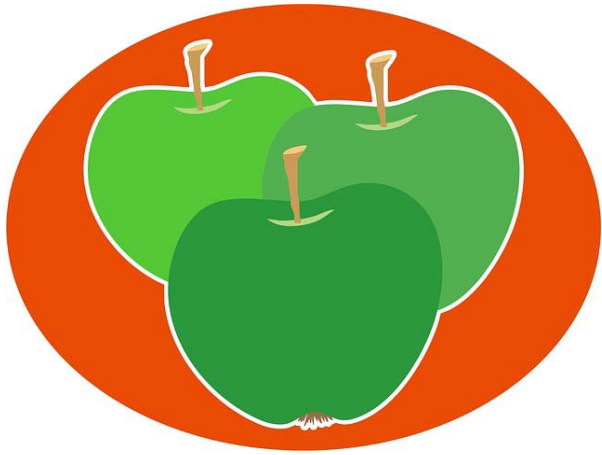



Who says water doesn't taste good? Try this: [Add one of these Fruit-Infused Water Recipes]. #hydrateforhealth




Enter [name of your organization's] sugar-free beverage recipe contest. Share your favorite healthy beverage recipe and you'll be entered to win [name a prize]! Winners will be announced [date]. #hydrateforhealth

Announcing Company Policies and Healthy Products

	<p>Did you try our new healthy snacks at [name of organization's] [place, e.g. vending machine, cafeteria, break-room, picnic]. #hydrateforhealth</p>
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	<p>Have you tried our new water bottle filling station? #hydrateforhealth</p>
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	<p>In our commitment to health, [name of organization] is now [describe new policy or initiative for healthy beverage environment]. What are you willing to commit to for your health? #hydrateforhealth</p>
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[Name of organization] wishes you and yours a weekend full of health choices! What are your healthy plans? #hydrateforhealth

General Education on Making Healthy Choices

[include this YouTube video in your post: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iptz4pVIRAI>].

How long does it take to work off a bottle of soda? [Watch this family work it off](#) and you'll agree it's not worth it! Join families of [name of organization] in taking the pledge to be a soda free family for 30 days! #hydrateforhealth

[include this YouTube video in your post <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNv-MU6m5V4&feature=youtu.be>]

Did you know that we consume 50 gallons of sugary drinks per year AND sugary drinks are a leading causes of obesity? Don't be a slave to sugar, [just pour it out!!](#) #hydrateforhealth



The average American drinks nearly 42 gallons of sweetened beverages a year, the equivalent of 39 pounds of extra sugar every year. Commit to sugar-free beverages this year and keep those pounds off! #hydrateforhealth



A recent study found that each 12-ounce serving of soda a child consumes increases his/her risk of obesity by 60%. What healthy beverage options have you started giving your kids instead of soda? #hydrateforhealth



Adults who drink one sugary drink a day are 27% more likely to be overweight. Imagine what could change if you eliminate sugary drinks! #hydrateforhealth

Sample Social Media Posts from COPC and Hydrate for Health Campaign



Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition shared a link.

May 8 · Edited

We'd say that this little video sums up how we feel when we drink water. Hop on over to our [Hydrate For Health](#) site to sign up your organization to participate in Employee Health & Fitness Month...you might find yourself dancing like a kid again. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfxB5ut-KTs>



evian baby&me

Dancing with my baby-me. evian Live young. Music: Here comes the Hotstepper - Evian remix by Yuksek
Download on iTunes: <http://bit.ly/BabynMe> Agency: BETC Di...

Like · Comment · Share



Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition shared a link.

June 20

Right in time for a sunny weekend - Professor Wellbody at [Pacific Science Center](#) is at it again with tips on steering clear from sugar-loaded drinks, and recipes for healthy, refreshing beverages.

<http://www.pacificsciencecenter.org/Wellbody-Blog/making-water-interesting>



Wellbody Recipe: Making Water Interesting

www.pacificsciencecenter.org

Sugary beverages = Bad health. What to do? New York City, now in a court brawl to ban the sale of large-size sodas, plasters subways with in-your-face billboards: "Your kids could be drinking themselves SICK. SUGARY DRINKS can bring on

Like · Comment · Share





Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition

July 29

School's out, but healthy beverage camp is in! We spent yesterday afternoon with Auburn Valley YMCA campers who had a knack for fun recipes with water and fruit - they even made their own "grape soda". Find the recipes they tested here: <http://hydrateforhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/water-recipes.pdf> — with Dorsol Plants.





Hydrate For Health shared a link.

May 5

We're kicking off May - Employee Health and Fitness Month - with a pledge to make healthier choices more available in the workplace. Will you join us? <http://hydrateforhealth.org/drink-healthy/>

The month of May is Employee Health and Fitness month. The Hydrate for Health campaign exists to help make the healthy beverage choice easier in the places where we spend a good portion of our day – from workplaces to schools.

Tools and Successes | Hydrate for Health
hydrateforhealth.org

Tools and Successes Support a Healthier Beverage Environment in the Workplace Many organizations – even those with the best intentions – fall short when it comes to ensuring that healthy choices are readily available for its staff and patrons. Until recently, it's been easier to obtain unhealthy prod...

Like · Comment · Share



Hydrate For Health shared Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)'s photo.

January 13

What's in your bottle today?

What's in your bottle? #DrinkH2O





Hydrate For Health

January 28 · Edited

We had a blast "cooking up" some fun water recipes yesterday with FEESTSeattle youth leaders, and talking about the dangers of soda and other sugary drinks. What a fun group! — with Dorsol Plants at Cheif Sealth highschool.



Like · Comment · Share





Hydrate For Health

February 18



Healthy technology is the best. Earlier today, we followed signs to this water station at [Seattle Children's Hospital](#). So refreshing! — at [Seattle Children's Hospital](#).

