



Public Health
Law Center

AT WILLIAM MITCHELL COLLEGE OF LAW



HEALTHY HEALTHCARE

Building Blocks for Success

A Guide For Developing Healthy Beverage Programs

There is no “one size fits all” approach to building a healthy beverage program. While the following are the typical components for effective programs, they can be tailored to fit the culture and goals of the organization. The other resources in this series are designed to support activities to implement these components. They also could be used to educate stakeholders about why and how healthy beverage programs are good for healthcare.



Convene a Healthy Beverage Workgroup

Beverage selections and procurement practices by healthcare facilities typically can involve administrative, legal, logistical and even emotional factors related to current beverage vendors and the selections they offer. This is why it is important

The Public Health Law Center has created a series of resources designed to inform and support efforts to promote healthy beverage choices within Minnesota workplace settings, with a special focus on healthcare. This guide describes the key components for successful healthy beverage programs.

Quick REFERENCE GUIDE



Convene a healthy beverage workgroup



Assess beverage availability and staff perspectives



Develop a healthy beverage policy and program



Engage senior management and key stakeholders



Educate staff, visitors, and stakeholders



Implement the policy



Track progress



Addressing and overcoming challenges



Celebrate success

to form an *internal workgroup* of individuals representing a broad range of departments within the facility who can advise on crafting a workable healthy beverage program, and who could serve as advocates for the initiative as it evolves.

Assess Beverage Availability and Staff Perspectives

Assess the beverage environment: A critical early step in creating a healthy beverage program for a facility is carrying out an assessment of the beverage environment. This assessment will provide baseline information to inform the development of a program and implementation plan, and can be used to track changes after the program is in place. The assessment could be carried out by members of the workgroup, and could be formal or informal.

The assessment should document:

- Types of beverages available, how they are made available (i.e., the [access points](#), such as vending machines, caterers, cafés, cafeteria, etc.), and how frequently they are purchased (e.g., total sales per month) at each location and department.
- Availability of both unhealthy and healthy options, their prices and placement throughout the facility.
- Analysis of any contracts or agreements the organization has with food and beverage providers, including vending machine operators, cafeteria or retail contractors, concessions, caterers, etc.

The [Healthy Beverage Baseline Audit Tool](#) provides a sample or a template for the workgroup to use.

Survey staff: The workgroup could also survey staff to gather information about their awareness and knowledge of beverage choices. One Boston facility sent a [Hospital Staff Survey](#) via email to all employees to collect information about their

Workgroup Members

These may include representatives from:

- Food service
- Nursing
- Nutrition
- Human resources
- Facilities
- Purchasing
- Union representatives
- External relations
- Financial office
- Upper management
- Pediatrics
- Cardiology
- Other key staff members

Workgroup Functions

The workgroup members can collaborate to design and implement a healthy beverage program by:

- Conducting an assessment of the beverage environment
- Informing the development of a healthy beverage policy
- Building support for the policy
- Developing a plan to implement the policy
- Coordinating and implementing employee education about healthy beverage choices
- Carrying out many of the implementation activities:
 - » Clearly defining the healthy beverage goal
 - » Creating measurable benchmarks
 - » Developing timelines for meeting benchmarks

perspectives on how to approach implementing a healthy beverage program. The survey could also be a tool for sharing key findings from the assessment of the beverage environment.

Use the assessment and survey data to inform the development of the healthy beverage program. Also, when communicating with staff and other stakeholders about the need for a healthy beverage program, being able to frame the message with

documentation showing where and the extent to which sugary drinks are available will help to make a compelling case.



Develop a Healthy Beverage Policy and Program

Once the workgroup has completed an assessment of the beverage environment in the facility, a next step is to formulate a healthy beverage policy and a

TABLE 1: Using MAPPS to Frame a Healthy Beverage Program

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote tap water and healthy beverage choices through cafeteria signage and a hospital-wide education campaign. ■ Counter-advertise health effects of sugary drink choices. ■ Promote the organization’s beverage program through internal newsletters and feature events. ■ Share the financial, ecological, and potential health impacts of bottled beverage usage to promote a reusable mug or pourable beverage program. ■ Notify external media outlets about the initiative and how it aligns with the organization’s mission of improving the human and environmental health of the community.
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide only drinks that meet healthy beverage standards as determined by the internal workgroup. ■ Reduce access to unhealthy beverage choices by limiting the number and portion sizes of offerings. ■ Increase access to filtered water stations. ■ Provide or sell fruit- and herb-infused tap water in retail, catering or other areas throughout the facility. ■ Provide or sell reusable mugs/bottles with organization logos for healthy non-bottled beverage promotion.
Point-of-Purchase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Add and/or increase education/signage for healthy beverages with an emphasis on water. ■ Adjust beverage cooler plan-a-grams to favor healthy beverage product placement. ■ Remove advertisements for unhealthy beverages in facility including on vending machine facades, or only allow advertisements for beverages that meet the healthy beverage policy.
Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change the relative price of healthy vs. unhealthy beverages to make a healthy choice more affordable and desirable. ■ Offer discounts and promotions for customers using reusable mugs.
Social Support and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create an environment of support for healthy habits by engaging senior management and clinician advocates. ■ Connect the healthy beverage program to a broader effort within the organization to create a healthier workplace and support a healthy community.

program for implementing the policy throughout the organization.

“Map” the Program: One way to plan and organize a program is to use the MAPPS strategies developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

MAPPS represents five evidence-based strategies that, when combined, can have a profound influence on improving health behaviors by changing community environments, and includes: **M**edia, **A**ccess, **P**oint-of-decision (or point-of-purchase) information, **P**rice, and **S**ocial Support/ services.¹ Table 1 provides examples of program elements for each of these strategy areas. The MAPPS strategies should be applied in the [places where beverages are sold](#) or provided including vending machines, cafeterias, concessions, meeting places, patient trays in hospitals, and lounges.

Connect with other organizations working on similar efforts to share resources, build momentum, and learn from their efforts.

Healthcare facilities throughout the country have found innovative and creative ways to utilize the MAPPS strategy to implement their beverage programs. Visit this [Showcase of Healthy Beverage Programs in Health Care](#) for examples of these programs.

Document the Policy: To be meaningful and sustainable, a policy must be written down. Otherwise, there is little guarantee that a policy will be maintained through organizational shifts, or that it will be implemented consistently. A healthy beverage policy could be a stand-alone policy, or it could be incorporated into other organizational policies, such as a wellness policy or sustainable food service policy.

Creating a written policy makes it easier to incorporate the policy into future requests-for-bid and contracts (see below for more on this topic). Resources to help with policy drafting include:

Key policy elements:

- Statement summarizing why the organization developed the program (i.e., a statement of the program’s mission)
- Clear definitions
- Nutritional standards and other product specifications (including portion sizes, sodium limits, etc.)
- Provisions addressing the key, if not all, access points
- Provisions identifying the personnel responsible for implementing the policy
- Information relevant to bid or contract drafting

- Public Health Law Center’s [Policy Drafting Checklist](#)
- Sample hospital healthy beverage policies:
 - » [St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center Sample Policy and Case Study](#)
 - » [Fairview Hospital Sample Policy and Case Study](#)

For links to other healthy food and beverage policy resources, see the fact sheet [Healthy Beverage Hot Spots](#).

Promote Tap Water: Promoting water as an essential, healthy choice is a vital part of any healthy beverage program, and is consistent with the goal of creating a healthy workplace. The organization can advocate for tap water based on its low cost and how it benefits the environment by reducing bottle and other waste. A first step in championing tap water is to ensure ready access to clean, attractive water fountains, coolers, or filtered water units. Educating about government or independent testing of water can help build confidence in its safety. Tap water promotion can also be achieved by distributing reusable water

bottles through on-site stores or giveaways. For more information about promoting water and tap water in particular, see [Thirsty for Health](#), another resource in this series.

Engage Senior Management and Key Stakeholders

The proposed healthy beverage policy should be presented to [senior management](#) for discussion and approval. Senior management is a key stakeholder group within any organization because it will be responsible for implementing and enforcing the policy. Thus, buy-in from senior management is critical.

Clinical staff members within the organization who recognize the link between [sugary drink consumption](#) and [poor public and environmental health](#) can be compelling advocates in meetings with senior management. Health Care Without Harm has a [Hydrate for Health presentation](#) (and [Talking Points](#)) that can be used in presentations to administration.

Educate Staff, Visitors, and Other Stakeholders

A robust and proactive educational and outreach plan stressing the importance of serving healthy beverages and their connection to the organization's mission can facilitate implementation and promote program sustainability. With administration support, inform staff about the [negative health impacts of sugary drinks](#), associated health costs, and about the benefits of healthy alternatives such as [water](#).

Start educating early: Education should be done early to promote better awareness and understanding

If staff perceives that the process is participatory, transparent and straightforward, they are more likely to support it, or at least not oppose it.

of the reasoning behind the policy. Early education also provides opportunities for staff to share their concerns and for strategies to address these concerns to be developed. If staff perceives that the process is participatory, transparent and straightforward, they are more likely to support it, or at least not oppose it.

Multiple educational and outreach strategies may be used including internal newsletters, electronic communications, company website, staff meetings, informational sessions, taste-testings, games and educational events, and signage and flyers posted in the facility.

Early education also provides the opportunity to frame the policy favorably — emphasizing that it promotes healthier choices; creates a healthier work environment; and demonstrates the organization's commitment to its mission and to promoting community health.

An effective means of educating staff, clients and visitors is posting point-of-purchase signage that provides information about which beverages are healthy and which are not, and why. If the organization plans to remove sugary drinks from its premises, point-of-purchase signage can be used during the transition period, before beverages are removed. The Boston Public Health Commission has developed traffic light education signage, including posters and brochures about healthy beverage choices that could be used as templates.² These educational efforts can transition into the “official launch” of the healthy beverage program.³

Talking with Vendors: During the transition to a healthier beverage environment, open and ongoing communications with beverage vendors is key to maintaining positive working relationships with them. Begin by reviewing the terms and conditions of current contracts with beverage vendors and on-site food venues. Encourage compliance among vendors within the terms of a current contract by forwarding a written copy of the new beverage policy specifications,



along with a statement presenting the organization's goals to model healthy behaviors and promote public and environmental health through the provision of healthy beverages. Government-owned facilities may also be subject to [laws](#) that give contracting preferences to eligible legally blind vendors.⁴ This means that these vendors can be a particularly important group to engage with, although these laws do not explicitly limit the organization's authority to implement a healthy beverage policy.

[Existing beverage contracts](#) can present both challenges and opportunities in transitioning to a healthy beverage policy immediately. The contract terms may dictate the timeframe for implementing a new policy, depending on product specifications already included in the contract and when the contract expires. An organization could choose to negotiate with current vendors to phase in healthier options before the contract ends. If the contracts are short-term or ending soon, an organization might decide to wait until the contracts are up for renewal to negotiate new contracts incorporating the policy language, or requesting bids that incorporate the new

Contracts trump internal policies, unless those policies are incorporated into the contract.

policy. Contracts trump internal policies, unless those policies are incorporated into the contract.

Waiting until the contracts expire may minimize conflict with vendors. This waiting period provides an opportunity to implement an education campaign before changes are visible. If contracts are of varying duration, an organization may want to consider building in a grace period for the contracts that end sooner, so that changes are implemented across the organization at the same time.

It is critical that the organization's healthy beverage program is created with a mission and vision based on health serving as the foundation for its development. This is why the development of the beverage specifications and product profile for beverages to be sold or available in the facility should be handled by a healthy beverage workgroup made up of members of facility staff. Many beverage vendors have viable non-sugary alternatives to offer, and so are able

The following talking points suggest responses for common concerns and offers from beverage vendors when talking to them about the healthy beverage policy and program.

Beverage Vendor's Concern	Healthcare Facility's Response
"You are taking away individual choice."	"We, as an organization are providing plenty of choices for healthier beverages that align with our mission of supporting the health of the community we serve. If someone would like a beverage that is not being offered here, they continue to have the choice to bring it from home."
"We can advertise collaboratively on this program."	"This is the hospital's initiative. Our internal marketing department will help us to promote healthier beverages. We would appreciate your partnership and support in meeting the timeline established in this healthy beverage program."
"We have a list of beverages that have a 'healthy' profile."	"Our hospital's internal healthy beverage workgroup is establishing clearly defined beverage specifications. When they are fully established, we will provide these to you. At this time we would appreciate receiving your list of healthy beverages that meet these specifications."

to accommodate institutional policies focused on healthy choices without a problem. Some vendors, however, may express concerns and offer to engage in the development and roll-out of the policy and program. It is not recommended that such offers be accepted. Pragmatically, vendors are in the business of selling products, not promoting health or providing healthcare. However, after the organization's healthy beverage policy has been established, it makes sense to engage beverage vendors, communicate the program's specifications to them, and seek their support.

Beverage vendors also should not assume the role of providing verbal or written health information or advertisements about their products to staff in the facility. All messages sent to staff during the transformation period should be developed by the workgroup. The key role of vendors is to provide beverages that meet the facility's specifications and to meet the deadlines established by the internal workgroup for the program roll-out. Vendor activities in the program roll-out may include replacing current vending machines that have advertising with clear-faced machines with no advertising, re-stocking beverages according to new shelving or placement strategies, and

The key role of vendors is to provide beverages that meet the facility's specifications and to meet the deadlines established by the internal workgroup for the program roll-out.

removing other forms of ads for beverages defined as unhealthy or that do not meet the standards of the organization's new healthy beverage policy.

The following talking points suggest responses for common concerns and offers from beverage vendors when talking to them about the healthy beverage policy and program.



Implement the policy

Location Matters: Consistent and comprehensive implementation of the policy is key to success. As noted above, each location or venue where beverages are sold or provided will present different challenges and opportunities for implementation. For more information about how locations and venues factor

into implementation, see the fact sheet [Healthy Beverage Hot Spots](#).

Put It in Writing: An important part of the implementation plan should be taking steps to make sure the healthy beverage policy is incorporated into requests-for-bid and contracts going forward. Policies must be incorporated into requests-for-bid and contracts to be enforceable with vendors. The policy document can also be given to current and potential contractors, as part of efforts to educate contractors about the organization's goals and policies, and to encourage compliance.



Addressing and Overcoming Challenges

As with any change, challenges may occur. While many staff, clients and visitors will respond positively to changes towards a healthy beverage environment, there may be some negative responses as well. Many people feel attached to certain food and beverage choices, and may express strong feelings about the removal of a selection. Many facilities have found that providing advanced notice about the initiative reduces negative reactions to the transition to healthier beverages. Share with all stakeholders that, as a healthcare organization, the facility will not offer certain beverage selections — or will make them less readily available — because promotion of unhealthy choices is inconsistent with its mission. Consistent messaging in the facility newsletter and in the cafeteria, coupled with informational and encouraging emails from upper level administration, can help address concerns about implementation of the new healthy beverage policy.

Healthy People Are Also Healthy for the Bottom

Line: A common misperception with healthy beverage programs is that they will lose money. Beverage vending machines generate income, and many people assume that moving to healthier options means fewer

people will buy beverages. However, the experience of schools that have implemented similar measures suggests that after an initial adjustment period, beverage revenue remains fairly constant and customers embrace the sale of healthier options — particularly water and 100% juices. Hospitals implementing healthy beverage programs show similar results.

Innovative programs that encourage consumption

Measures to reduce availability of sugary drinks improve the health of employees, decreasing costs to the organization in the form of healthcare expenditures and lost productivity.

of healthier beverages can also provide additional revenue, such as:

- Selling BPA-free reusable mugs for water refill
- Instituting promotional programs for new and healthy beverage alternatives
- Providing fruit- and herb-infused water for free or a low cost
- Adding fresh fruit and vegetable smoothies to retail offerings

It is also important to keep in mind that measures to reduce availability of sugary drinks improve the health of employees, decreasing costs to the organization in the form of healthcare expenditures and lost productivity.

For more information on this topic, see the fact sheet in this series, [Healthy Beverage Programs, Healthy Bottom Lines](#).



Track Progress

Tracking is an important component of healthy beverage programs. It helps with monitoring progress toward goals; understanding the economic impact of the strategies being used; reporting on successes to upper management and the community; and recognizing the program's impact.

Two Ways to Track: Two major tracking pathways include measuring sugary drink purchases, and measuring healthy beverage purchases (i.e., increases in healthy beverage purchases vs. tracking decreases in sugary drink sales, as applicable). An organization could choose to track one, or both, if feasible, and depending on the type of program it has decided to implement.

In either case progress should be measured against baseline numbers (e.g., the organization's purchasing of sugary drinks prior to or at the onset of the program) and the overall annual numbers (total beverage budget, total beverage sales, etc). Be sure that all areas affected by the healthy beverage program are included in the tracking process. It is helpful to distinguish between [different areas of food service](#) — patient, retail/cafeteria, vending, and catering — and to set specific targets for each area.

Tracking shifts in institutional beverage purchases may showcase shifts in beverage selections by staff and visitors. Tracking information that quantifies and illustrates the amount of calories or grams of sugar avoided, or the reduction of waste diverted from landfills with fewer plastic bottles sold, are creative ways to communicate the program's effectiveness.

Keep in mind that when tracking healthy beverage increases, increases in tap water consumption will not be accounted for, so this should be noted when reporting results.

Tracking Tools

Health Care Without Harm provides two Microsoft Excel tracking spreadsheets that can be modified according to an organization's specific program needs and objectives. It is important to note that [definitions](#) of healthy beverages and sugary beverages should be clearly established before program implementation and tracking begins.

[Healthy Beverage Tracking Tool:](#) This tracking tool monitors dollars spent by the organization on healthy beverages. The spreadsheet allows users to enter monthly totals in four categories of food service. It will calculate annual spending on healthy beverages, and compare it to baseline numbers and the annual beverage budget. There are also columns to designate locally/sustainably-produced beverages, if desired.

[Sugar Sweetened Beverages Tracking Tool:](#) This tracking tool monitors dollars spent by the organization on sugary drinks. The spreadsheet allows users to enter monthly totals in four categories of food service. It will calculate annual spending on sugary drinks, and compare it to baseline numbers and the annual beverage budget.



Celebrate Successes

Celebrating successful implementation is a key part of maintaining momentum. Taking time to celebrate also can deepen the organization's commitment to the new, healthier "normal" that it has worked hard to create for staff, visitors, vendors, and the larger community. Share tracking results and beverage trends in the staff newsletter with encouraging commentary. Host events with local advocates

and community leaders to highlight the positive steps the organization has taken to support healthy, sustainable choices. By choosing to promote healthy drinks and access to public drinking water instead of sugary drinks, the organization is demonstrating its leadership and commitment to community health.

Additional Resources

This guide and the other resources in this series can be found on the Public Health Law Center's website at www.publichealthlawcenter.org and Health Care Without Harm's website at www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org.

The [Commons Health Hospital Challenge](#) program, led by the Institute for a Sustainable Future, also has resources and technical assistance geared towards communities, clinicians and Minnesota hospitals committed to leading obesity prevention efforts in their communities. [Health Care Without Harm](#), through its national [Healthy Food in Health Care Program](#), provides technical assistance and educational programming to support a national network of healthcare organizations in creating healthy food and beverage environments in their facilities. The [American Heart Association](#) also has several [policy position statements](#) on obesity prevention, and related resources to support healthy food and beverage environments in a variety of settings.

Last updated: March 2013

This publication was prepared by the Public Health Law Center at William Mitchell College of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Health Care Without Harm, with assistance from Jamie Harvie with the Institute for a Sustainable Future.

The Boston Public Health Commission Healthy Beverage Toolkit was utilized with permission in the development of these resources.



Financial support for this series was provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. Financial support was also provided by the [Minnesota Cancer Alliance](#) with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (Cooperative Agreement Number 5U55DP003045). The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC or those of any other person.

The Public Health Law Center provides information and technical assistance on issues related to public health. The Center does not provide legal representation or advice. This document should not be considered legal advice. For specific legal questions, consult with an attorney.

Endnotes

- ¹ More information about the CDC MAPPS strategy can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/recovery/PDF/N_and_PA_MAPPS_strategies.pdf.
- ² BOSTON PUB. HEALTH COMM'N, HEALTHY BEVERAGE TOOLKIT 51-53, available at <http://www.bphc.org/programs/cib/chronicdisease/healthybeverages/Forms%20%20Documents/toolkit/HealthyBeverageToolkitFinal.pdf>.
- ³ Examples of how facilities have implemented their programs are available from Health Care Without Harm's Showcase of Healthy Beverage in Health Care Programs, http://www.noharm.org/lib/downloads/food/Healthy_Beverage_Presentation.pdf.
- ⁴ See PUB. HEALTH LAW CTR., HEALTHY VENDING AND THE RANDOLPH SHEPPARD ACT (2013), available at <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/PHLC%20Healthy%20Vending%20and%20the%20Randolph%20Sheppard%20Act%202.12.2013.pdf>.