



Healthy Food in Health Care Best Practices

Healthy Beverage Program

St. Elizabeth's Medical Center: A facility of Steward Health Care System

Demographic information:

St. Elizabeth's Medical Center, a teaching hospital of Tufts University School of Medicine, is a 252-bed tertiary care hospital in Brighton, Massachusetts with 2357 employees.

Steward Health Care System is a community-based accountable care organization and community hospital network with more than 17,000 employees serving more than one million patients annually in 85 communities. Hospitals in the system include Carney Hospital in Dorchester, Good Samaritan Medical Center in Brockton, Holy Family Hospital in Methuen, Merrimack Valley Hospital in Haverhill, Morton Hospital in Taunton, Nashoba Valley Medical Center in Ayer, Norwood Hospital, Quincy Medical Center, Saint Anne's Hospital in Fall River and St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in Brighton.

Executive Summary Statement

Steward Health Care System has implemented a system-wide Healthy Beverage Policy in all of its 10 facilities in order to model sound nutritional choices to the community, and address diet-related diseases such as obesity and Type 2 Diabetes. This comprehensive system-wide policy is the outcome of a successful sugar sweetened beverage reduction program undertaken by the system's largest hospital, St. Elizabeth's Medical Center

Problem:

Sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) contribute to the increased prevalence of obesity, Diabetes, and associated chronic diseases that go along with weight gain. Additionally, the production, consumption and waste associated with sugar sweetened and bottled beverages have numerous negative environmental consequences. The dramatic increase in consumption of SSBs in the U.S. is fueled by advertising, a significant rise in availability, and the fact that SSBs are relatively inexpensive compared to healthier food and beverage options. Hospitals can play an important role by modeling healthy behaviors in the foods and beverages they serve. With their substantial purchasing dollars, hospitals can have a significant impact on market trends to support overall public health.

Addressing the Problem:

St. Elizabeth's readdressed their system-wide goals of creating a healthier workplace and leading by example for the community by initiating its *Sugar Sweetened Beverage Reduction Program* in March of 2011, with the support of the Boston Public Health Commission and Health Care Without Harm.

The program's strategic plan encourages healthy beverage choices through product placement and pricing changes, and a color-coded beverage education system to inform customers about healthier and unhealthy beverage options. The color-coded system identified the least healthy beverages with a red designation, the most healthy beverages with a green designation, and those beverage beverages to consume only on occasion with a yellow designation.

Red beverages are high in sugar, sodium and/or fat content. Yellow beverages have moderate amounts of sugar and sodium, and green beverages have no added sugars and/or artificial sweeteners. Additionally, a free filtered water machine was installed in the main cafeteria to encourage more water consumption, and advertising of SSB's was reduced by replacing vending machines with clear glass faces.

The program's strategy was crafted by the facility's internal Sugar Sweetened Beverage (SSB) reduction committee, and approved by a member of Senior Leadership. The internal SSB Reduction Committee was comprised of membership from the medical center's Senior Leadership Team, Food & Nutrition Services, Human Resources, Employee Health, Facilities, Marketing and Communications, and Mission and Community Partnerships Departments.

Implementation Process:

The St. Elizabeth's SSB Program was rolled out on March 14, 2011. The SSB Committee facilitated the coordination of the program. Participation from hospital labor unions was also a key component of the committee's work to ensure buy-in from employees. Purchasing changes and decisions were made by the Food & Nutrition Services Director, with the support of the SSB Committee. Contracts with beverage suppliers were not changed, but ordering changes were made to increase the procurement of "yellow" and "green" beverages, and the reduce purchasing of "red" beverages. Additionally, existing contract language with the on-campus gift shop and popular coffee retailer enabled the hospital to make the changes consistent across its entire campus.

The implementation process also included a multi-faceted education campaign for hospital employees that utilized existing communication venues such as weekly Food & Nutrition Services emails, the monthly employee newsletter, and digital signage around the hospital. Additionally, presentations were made at staff meetings, Frontline Leadership meetings, Operations meetings, and at individual department meetings.

The progress of the program at St. Elizabeth's is tracked by the Director of Mission & Community Partnerships, and the financial impact is tracked by the Food & Nutrition Services Department on an on-going basis.

As a result of the success at St. Elizabeth's, Steward implemented a system-wide Healthy Beverage policy for its 10 hospitals that sets limits on the number of sugar sweetened beverages available in all of its retail, vending, catering and patient feeding venues. The policy encourages the consumption of

healthier beverages through guidelines on product placement and marketing strategies, and by pricing healthier beverages at a better value to the customers.

Benefits:

As a result of St Elizabeth's SSB program the hospital removed 40 varieties of "red" beverages and added 43 "yellow" and "green" beverages.

"Red" beverage sales dropped 54% and "Green" beverage sales jumped over 30% with an increase in overall sales compared to the previous year.

Internally Steward Health Care has been able to highlight the program as a Community Benefit among other efforts to support community health: <http://steward.org/St-Elizabeths/Patient-and-Visitor-Information/Community-Benefits/Community-Benefits-Programs>. Due to their successful efforts, they housed Boston City Mayor Menino and surrounding hospitals for a spotlight event on obesity prevention efforts: <http://steward.org/news/St-Elizabeths/St-Es-Boston-Hospitals-Showcase-Success-in-Reducing-Sugar-Sweetened-Beverage-Consumption>

The Steward Health Care facilities received positive media attention highlighting their efforts to create healthier food environments throughout their health system with one of their facilities; St. Anne's Hospital modeling their healthy beverage program efforts:

<http://www.heraldnews.com/newsnow/x2320076/Saint-Annes-Hospital-asking-employees-to-rethink-their-sugary-drinks-and-make-healthier-choices>

Challenges and Lessons Learned:

Challenges to rolling out the SSB program at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center were minimal. The support from upper management, combined with the strategic planning and coordinated effort of multiple departments, helped to make the process very smooth.

The biggest challenge the hospital has faced is working with departments that seek exemptions from the SSB policy. A few departments have expressed concern about not having specific brands of sugar sweetened beverages at their disposal. However, consistent communication and education from department directors and Senior Leadership has helped to manage these issues when they arise and keep the program going strong.

Next Steps:

The next steps for St. Elizabeth and other Steward hospitals are to develop and implement a vendor system strategy. This strategy will ensure that the all vendor contracts will include beverages that are in compliance with the SSB reduction program. Using this strategy throughout the Steward system will make it easier for other hospitals to adopt and implement this program. This way Steward will be able to provide more robust support to the remaining facilities to support similar positive outcomes as seen at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center.

INTERNAL HOSPITAL POLICY:

Steward Health Care Healthy Beverage Initiative

Steward Health Care is combating the community health issues of obesity and diabetes by reducing the amount of sugar sweetened beverages consumed in all of its retail, vending, catering and patient feeding venues. Steward Health Care encourages the consumption of healthier beverages by reducing the availability and positioning of sugar sweetened beverages and by pricing healthier beverages at a better value to the customers.

RETAIL OUTLETS

- Sugar sweetened beverages shall be no more than 15% of all selections available.
- No sugar sweetened beverages (soda or juice) shall be sold / distributed through post mix and or fountain systems.
- Consumption of sugar sweetened beverages shall be discouraged by pricing them at a premium above healthier beverages and in less desirable locations.
- No sugar sweetened beverage signage and or marketing materials shall be used.
- Marketing and sales materials should be designed to encourage the purchase and consumption of non sugar sweetened beverages.
- Filtered tap water shall be available at no cost to customers.

VENDING OUTLETS

- Sugar sweetened beverages shall be no more than 15% of all selections available.
- Consumption of sugar sweetened beverages shall be discouraged by pricing them at a premium above healthier beverages and in less desirable locations.
- No sugar sweetened beverage signage and or marketing materials shall be used.
- Marketing and sales materials should be designed to encourage the purchase and consumption of non sugar sweetened beverages.

CATERING

- No sugar sweetened beverages shall be sold and or served at catering events.

PATIENT FEEDING

- No sugar sweetened beverages shall be part of unit floor stock.
- Consumption of filtered tap water shall be available and encouraged.
- No sugar sweetened beverages shall be on the Patient menu.
- Limited appropriate medically necessary accommodations shall be allowed.