

Policies to Improve the Beverage Environment: Shifting Availability and Expectations



A report prepared by the Bay Area Nutrition & Physical Activity Collaborative | August 2014

Sugary drinks, including sodas, are now linked to greater risks for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and other illness in those who drink them regularly.¹⁻⁴ Moreover, the sugar and extra calories in these beverages replace foods and beverages that provide vitamins, minerals and other nutrients necessary for health.^{1,5}

An effective way to counter the widespread consumption of sugary beverages is to create policies that limit their availability, ensuring that healthy beverages are the easy option—and ideally, the only option. This paper reports the experience of diverse Bay Area organizations that have adopted policies to provide healthy beverages and presents policy components and best practices that other organizations can use to make healthy beverages the easy choice.

Changing the Beverage Landscape

The Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative (BANPAC)—a coalition of more than 250 organizations dedicated to improving the health of Bay Area residents—has been promoting policies regarding healthy beverages since 2012. Officially titled “Pledge the Practice! Pass the Policy!” the BANPAC campaign supports organizations in reducing or eliminating sugary beverages in their facilities so that Bay Area residents—youth and adults—are not faced with unhealthy beverages in the workplace, in after-school youth and sports programs, and elsewhere throughout their communities.

During 2012-2013, BANPAC and its partners worked with more than 75 organizations to pass healthy beverage policies that reduce access to sugary beverages and increase access to healthy beverages (water, milk, unsweetened coffee and tea, 100% juice drinks). These policies have affected more than 750,000 Bay Area residents at youth-serving and community-based organizations, worksites, health care settings, municipalities and faith-based communities.

BANPAC evaluated its work with 20 of the more than 75 organizations. The results of that evaluation form the basis for this report.

20 Bay Area Organizations in the BANPAC Evaluation

- Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland
- Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, Richmond
- Building Blocks for Kids Collaborative, Richmond
- California Convergence Coordinating Office, Oakland
- Community Association for Preschool Education, Livermore/Dublin/Pleasanton
- Chinatown Public Health Center, San Francisco
- City of San Pablo
- Community Health Partnership (CHPSCC), Santa Clara/San Mateo counties
- Easter Hill United Methodist Church, Richmond
- Footsteps Child Care, Belmont/Redwood Shores/Redwood City
- Indian Health Services of Santa Clara Valley, San Jose
- La Clinica de La Raza, Alameda/Contra Costa/Solano counties
- Life Steps Foundation, Burlingame
- Mission Head Start, San Francisco
- Reach Potential Movement, Mountain View/Sunnyvale
- San Francisco Dept. of Public Health Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program
- San Francisco County Nutrition Action Plan
- Sojourner Truth Presbyterian Church, Richmond
- San Francisco Children’s Dental Health Committee
- Teen Success, Inc. (Bay Area-wide)

EXAMINING BEVERAGE POLICY IMPACT

In partnership with BANPAC, Ad Lucem Consulting evaluated the results of the campaign with 20 organizations using the following methods:

- Reviewed elements included in each organization's beverage policies
- Analyzed self-reported assessments of beverage availability before and after the policy was adopted
- Interviewed the participating organizations about the policy development, adoption, and implementation process

Gold-Standard Beverage Policies

BANPAC encouraged participating organizations to adopt strict policies that meet the "100% Healthy Beverage Standards" set by the California Public Health Institute. Key components of this gold-standard policy include the following:

- Eliminate 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

All 20 participating organizations met the gold-standard policy components; moreover, 19 organizations expanded their policy to include guidelines for healthy food and 18 included guidelines for physical activity.

Changing Sugary Beverage Availability

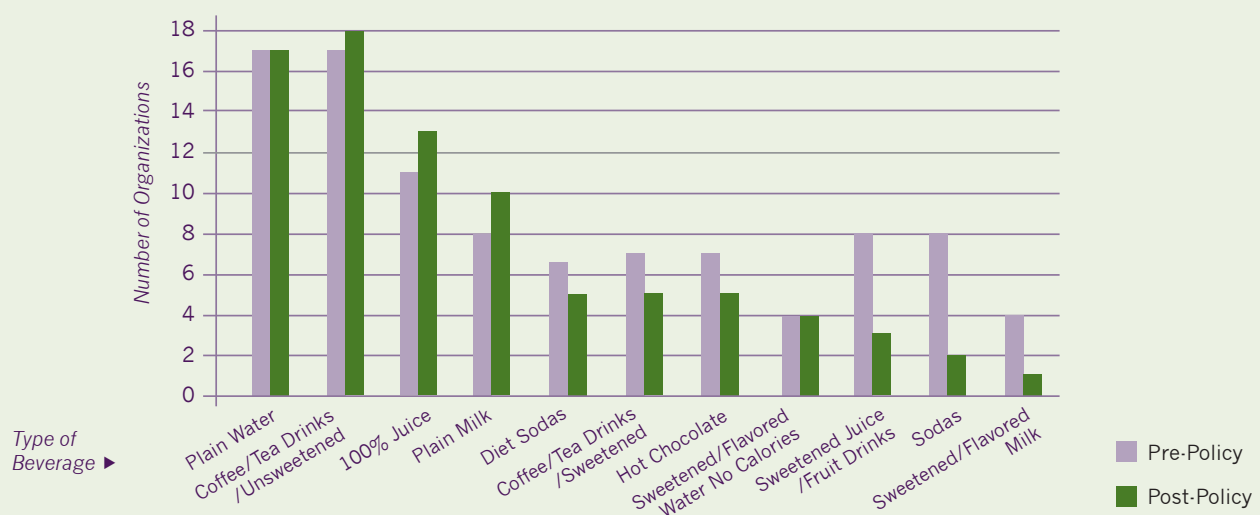
Adopting healthy beverage policies created a shift both in the types of beverages available within each organization and in the expectations about beverage choices. Figure 1 details the changes in beverages available before and after policy adoption for the most common beverage types (beverages that were available in five or more organizations).

Plain water and unsweetened coffee and tea were the beverages most readily available both before and after policy adoption and were served or sold at almost all organizations. Sugary beverages became less available after policy adoption.

Changes in specific practices for the 18 organizations completing the post-policy assessment are shown in Figure 1. Highlights include the following:

- Of the 8 organizations that sold or served sodas before adopting a policy, 7 eliminated them; 1 organization made soda newly available
- Of the 7 organizations that sold or served diet soda, 4 eliminated it; 2 organizations made diet soda newly available
- Of the 8 organizations that sold or served sweetened juice or fruit drinks, 6 eliminated them; 1 organization made these drinks newly available

Figure 1. **Beverages Available Before and After Adopting a Healthy Beverages Policy, 18 Organizations**



- The 4 organizations that sold or served sweetened or flavored milk eliminated it; 1 organization made sweetened or flavored milk newly available
- 1 organization removed its beverage vending machine

Best Practices to Eliminate Sugary Beverages

A number of strategies helped organizations develop and implement a healthy beverage policy. These strategies could be used by any organization seeking to create such a policy.

Tips for Policy Development

- **Don't reinvent the wheel**

The gold-standard healthy beverage policies that the youth and adult-serving organizations adopted are available on BANPAC's website (BANPAC.org). These policies can be tailored for other organizations wanting to join the movement.

- **Foster buy-in at all levels**

Form a wellness committee that takes ownership of the policy-development process and fosters consent from all parts of the organization. Including staff, residents or program beneficiaries, board members, parents, and others helps achieve broad support for the policy at all levels.

"It was very important for us to have executive buy-in and a wellness committee and to develop comprehensive wellness policies."

- **Take a holistic approach**

Developing a multi-pronged wellness policy can be easier and more appealing than focusing on a single topic such as beverages. A wellness approach can include healthy food, healthy movement, tobacco prevention, and breastfeeding accommodation as well as healthy beverages.

Tips for Policy Implementation

- **Don't let up**

Passing a policy is the first step in changing the beverage environment, but putting systems in place to ensure adherence to its guidelines is ongoing. It is important to ensure that all staff and clients are aware of the policy, understand and respect it, and take it seriously. Ongoing education about the relationship of beverages to health is key to obtaining long-term buy-in and compliance.



Water flavored with fruit is appealing to look at—and to drink.

- **Reinforce leadership support**

When senior management of the organization is on board, it is easier for staff to realize that the policy is not about their personal choice but about the overall health of the organization and the community it serves.

- **Establish guidelines**

Establish guidelines for common tasks that are affected by the policy. Implementation guidelines make a policy easy to follow, particularly when ordering food and beverages for meetings and events.

- **Take a positive approach**

Create opportunities for staff to demonstrate and taste-test healthy and tasty alternatives to soda and sweetened beverages—such as adding fresh fruit to water.

ONE ORGANIZATION'S EXPERIENCE

La Clinica de la Raza, one of the largest community health centers in Northern California, provides primary health care to a diverse population across 32 sites. With support from BANPAC, the organization rewrote its wellness policy to meet PHI's gold standard for healthy beverages and expanded the policy to include guidelines for healthy food, physical activity and lactation accommodation for nursing mothers. To foster staff support and facilitate Board approval of the comprehensive new wellness policy, the organization invited BANPAC to conduct wellness policy workshops for clinic management. Within a month of the three workshops, the La Clinica Board officially adopted the policy.

■ Let the policy guide tough decisions

Situations are bound to arise that will pose a challenge to maintaining adherence to the policy. An organization may consider providing soda at an event, or be tempted to install a vending machine to realize promised revenue. When decision points such as these come up, the beverage policy should be used as a guide to decisions that affect the health of the work environment.

■ Capture positive feedback

Share stories of staff changing their beverage choices or describe positive impacts of the beverage policy, communicating these successes both to other staff and to clients. Sharing positive feedback establishes strong support for adhering to the policy.

■ Be relevant

Tailor and expand the policy to best fit your organization. For example, using bilingual materials and including healthy beverages from a variety of cultures can make a policy relevant, understandable and easier to implement.

Summary

BANPAC's experience working with organizations to pass healthy beverage policies shows that it is feasible for many different types of organizations to adopt a healthy beverage policy. Even organizations that faced initial resistance eventually achieved a high level of organizational engagement and adopted a successful policy.

The experience of the 20 organizations evaluated for the BANPAC campaign also demonstrates that beverage policies change the beverage environment: the number of organizations serving or selling sweetened beverages decreased, and the variety of non-sugar-sweetened beverages increased.

Healthy beverage policy work is ongoing. Organizations in the Bay Area are continuing to adopt healthy beverage policies and add to the momentum for creating healthy beverage environments.

Organizational beverage policies are an important step in changing beverage environments and expectations about beverage choices.

For resources to develop and implement a healthy beverage policy, go to www.banpac.org.



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Endnotes

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