

California



Achieving a Healthy Weight... Say Yes to Water

“How can my daughter be at risk for diabetes at age 9!” cried Donna Walker to her own mother. “When the doctor said Sarah’s diet is not too healthy—plus all the soda, juice drinks, and not much water—I was so embarrassed.”

—Donna Walker, a California mother

Public Health Problem

Every day, Dr. Lin Nguyen advises moms like Donna to make healthier choices in the food they serve and to encourage their children to be more physically active. Overweight and obesity now affect 17% of all children and adolescents in the United States. In California, 1 of 9 children and 1 of 3 teenagers are overweight or obese, and these children are more likely to become obese adults. California’s medical costs related to overweight, obesity, and physical inactivity were \$41.2 billion in 2006 and continue to increase.

Compared with their peers, children who are overweight or obese are more likely to have high cholesterol and high blood pressure (risk factors for heart disease) and high blood sugar (an early indicator of diabetes). CDC recommends that children drink fewer sugary drinks and more water to prevent childhood obesity and its negative effects.

In California, 62% of youths aged 12–17 years and 41% of children aged 2–11 years drink at least one soda or other sweetened beverage every day. Growing research links sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) and 100% fruit juice consumption to obesity, and several studies suggest that drinking water instead of SSBs helps to prevent obesity.

In 2005, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) supported the passage of the School Junk Food and

High School Soda Ban laws, which prohibit the sale of soda and high-fat, high-sugar foods in schools. However, restricting students’ access to all SSBs and increasing their access to fresh drinking water remain a challenge.

Taking Action

The CDPH’s California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) program used funding from CDC’s Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) Block Grant to implement projects designed to reduce access to sugary drinks.

In 2010, California Project LEAN staff worked to educate former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s staff about healthy beverage policies and recommended two strategies to limit access to SSBs and increase water intake. The governor announced these strategies at his 2010 Summit on Health, Nutrition, and Obesity, which promoted best policies and evidence-based practices to local and state leaders.

With the help of the PHHS Block Grant, California Project LEAN staff were able to

- Develop and disseminate a “water in schools” survey to food service directors in California schools. The survey collected information about student access to drinking water in schools and the types of beverages that students drink.

Healthy People Objective

Overweight or obesity in children and adolescents

PHHS Block Grant Funding

Represents 100% of total program costs



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For more information on the
PHHS Block Grant, go to
www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant



For more information on
Healthy People, go to
www.healthypeople.gov

Taking Action (continued)

- Collaborate with key partners to work on legislation to ban the sale of high-calorie sports drinks in middle and high schools.
- Research and develop science-based policy briefs, recommendations, case studies, and speaking points for the governor and his staff on the benefits of healthy beverages and the harmful effects of sugary drinks for children.

Impact

By the next year, Sarah's doctor was impressed by her progress. Mrs. Walker had focused on changing Sarah's diet, cutting out sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), and encouraging Sarah to play every day at the park. Combining the PHHS Block Grant with California Project LEAN's Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant, the California Department of Public Health was able to reduce consumption of unhealthy foods and drinks among children.

For example,

- Research conducted by California Project LEAN contributed to state legislation designed to limit access to SSBs in child care settings, middle schools, and high schools, and to improve access to safe, free drinking water during school meals.
- The legislation to eliminate sports drinks in middle and high schools did not pass, but the measure promoting safe drinking water during school meals did—a positive outcome for the estimated 40% of students who do not have access to water during school meals.
- The governor signed legislation to limit access to sugary drinks for the estimated 750,000 children in state-licensed day care facilities.

Today, California Project LEAN continues to work to promote healthy beverages as a primary strategy to prevent obesity through research, partnerships, and policy efforts.

PHHS Block Grant Supports California Healthy People Priorities

The PHHS Block Grant provides flexible funding that states can use to prevent and control chronic diseases, respond quickly to outbreaks of infections and waterborne diseases, and address their specific public health needs. States can align their programs with any of the Healthy People objectives.

California uses its funds to address 15 health objective priorities, including

- Emergency medical services.
- Coronary heart disease.
- Rape or attempted rape.
- Physical activity in children and adolescents.
- Competencies for public health workers.

For a complete list of funded health objectives, go to
<http://www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant/statehpprior.htm>.