



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story and Lessons Learned

Title

Fill'er Up! School hydration stations make choosing water easier than ever.

Intervention Summary

According to the 2005-07 and 2011-12 California Health Interview Surveys, the percent of children under age 12 drinking one or more sodas or other sugar- sweetened beverages per day decreased, while adolescents, ages 12-17 consumption increased from 60% to 65%. In addition, in the local policy brief, Rethinking Sugary Drinks on the Central Coast it was found that adolescents (11-17 years old) surveyed in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties drank 4.5 times as many sugary drinks as water. In an effort to turn this trend around, the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency (LHD) secured four hydration stations through a CA4Health grant. LHD staff then worked with food services directors to identify which SNAP-Ed qualifying school would benefit most from having a hydration station installed. Four schools in three different districts were identified, Harbor High in Santa Cruz City School District, Shoreline Middle School in Live Oak School District and Watsonville High and Pajaro Valley High in Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD). In collaboration with the NEOPB's Research and Evaluation Section, LHD staff drafted the RE-AIM framework and identified assessment and evaluation tools for pre and post installation. By working with the principals and food service staff at the schools, LHD staff collected 1,389 student surveys which asked about current consumption of water and sugary drinks. School environmental surveys were also conducted which looked at access to sugary beverages on campus as well as clean sources of drinking water. To date, hydration stations have been installed in both high schools in PVUSD. Parents were so excited about the hydration station at Watsonville High that they began fundraising for a second one. Both principals have said they are receiving positive feedback regarding the stations.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

The initial meeting that LHD staff had with food service directors went really well. A timeline and plan was drafted that included the surveys that needed to be used to adhere to the RE-AIM framework and the hydration stations were given out so that school maintenance could look at the specifications to see where they should be installed. It was decided that the water bottles, that were also provided by CA4Health would be given to the schools when the assessments were completed and the stations were installed to help promote the use of the stations. After that initial meeting all progress seemed to stop. The food service directors became busy with other issues and student surveys and installation of the stations dropped down on the priority list. LHD staff continued to outreach by offering to help conduct surveys and provide technical assistance. LHD staff met again with the food service director at PVUSD and the principal at Shoreline Middle school and then the project started to gain momentum for those schools again. The two high schools in PVUSD conducted their surveys and installed the stations, but installation at Shoreline Middle School has been put on hold because of construction at the school. LHD staff continues to get updates from the principal and it is the hope that the station will be installed by December.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Short-term goals include:

- Establish a relationship with the new food service director in PVUSD.
- Conduct post-installation surveys at the high schools in PVUSD to see if water consumption has increased.
- Continue to keep updated on the status of the installation at Shoreline Middle School and conduct post installation surveys when appropriate.
- Continue to reach out to the Santa Cruz City School food service director who has not responded to follow up emails and phone calls.
- Work with the schools to promote the Rethink Your Drink message.

Long-term goals include:

- Advocate for increased water consumption in school wellness policies, including PTA or home and school clubs.
- Assess the hydration stations after a year of use.
- Continue to look for other opportunities or partners to provide hydration stations to other SNAP-Ed eligible schools.

Contact information about this Narrative

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