

Water First

A Toolkit for Promoting Water Intake in Community Settings



Consuming water, a beverage with zero calories and no added sugar, is critical to the health and well-being of children and their families.

When schools and community sites provide drinking water as an alternative to sugary drinks such as soda and sports drinks, they can help prevent obesity and dental caries and promote children's overall development.

Recently, there has been an increased focus on installing new appealing water sources such as reusable water bottle filling stations in community spaces. Simply installing these water sources, however, is not enough. In order to increase water intake, schools and community sites should also actively promote consumption of water from these new sources. Even in sites with older water sources, promoting water intake by displaying colorful signs or by providing cups can help boost water intake.

The following steps can help you to create a water promotion campaign at your site.



BUILD YOUR TEAM

Who do you want to invite to help design your promotion campaign?

Ask community members, staff and representatives from your target audience to join your team. This will help ensure that your message resonates with your target audience.

DEFINE YOUR MESSAGE

The next step is to decide what information about water you wish to convey.

Consider what currently prevents your site users from drinking water, and what messages will motivate them to drink more water. For example, you could highlight that water contains zero sugar or how tap water is inexpensive compared to sugary drinks.

SPREAD YOUR MESSAGE

Now it's time to decide how to encourage water consumption.

For example, you can use signs and flyers, create a mural, teach lessons, or conduct a tap water taste test. The method you choose will depend on who can help with implementation, how much funding is available, and your program goals.



Don't forget to provide cups next to water sources at your site. Cups allow site users to take more than just a few sips of water at a time.

Also encourage the use of reusable water bottles that can be filled at your site. If the budget allows, distribute free reusable water bottles to site users, or sell them as part of a healthy fundraiser.

For the complete Water First toolkit, please visit:

waterinschools.org/water-first-toolkit

Photo by Daisy Acosta.



Make a Splash by Promoting Water Intake

Simple promotion activities and initiatives can make a big difference in motivating site users to drink water. Below are a few examples of activities to promote water intake across different types of community sites. Pick a few strategies that seem achievable to implement right now. You can add to your efforts with more strategies later.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE WATER INTAKE IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS*

Child Care Facilities



Water Breaks. Incorporate regular water breaks into daily schedules. Encourage children and staff to fill up water bottles or visit the fountain to drink water.

Read the “Potter the Otter” Book. This illustrated story about an otter who loves to drink water was designed to educate parents, child care providers, and young children about how to make healthier beverage choices. Find the tale online at: www.pottertheotter.com.

Sing Along to Andy Z’s “Drink More Water”. This original song and accompanying music video encourages children to drink more water. Children can learn the moves and dance along! Watch the video online at: <http://bit.ly/1fZOKIL>.

Schools



Water Week. Dedicate a week to celebrate drinking water. Incorporate games, prizes, competitions, and lessons.

Door Decorating Competition. Have students or staff compete to decorate their classroom or office door with the most creative and compelling message about drinking water.

Water Curriculum. Incorporate lessons and activities about water and other beverages into school or afterschool activities.

Clinics



Prescription for Water. Provide patients with a “prescription” to drink more water. Patients can “fill” their prescriptions by filling up their water bottles at the site’s water sources.

Activity Worksheets. Fun and educational worksheets about water and sugary drinks can be made available in waiting rooms.

Logo Design Competition. Host a competition in which patients or employees create logos, posters or water bottle designs to promote water intake. Incorporate winning designs into the water promotion at your site.

Community Sites (e.g. libraries, family resource centers, museums)



Water Contract. Invite individuals or families to sign contracts pledging to drink more water and fewer sugary beverages.

Small Giveaways. Hand out inexpensive prizes such as pencils, stickers, magnets and temporary tattoos that feature messages about drinking water.

Play “Share the Love, Share the Water Video” in Waiting Rooms or Common Spaces. This short animated video available in English and Spanish describes the benefits of drinking water and provides families with tips to make drinking water the easy choice. Watch the video online at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajjDoKIN7Lw.

Parks and Other Outdoor Sites



Paint a Community Mural. Create a mural next to your site’s water sources. Include images and messages to showcase why water is important to your community.

Staff Training. Educate staff about the benefits of drinking water so that they can serve as role models for site users.

Dress Up Your Water Source. Improve the appeal of your water sources with metal plaques or colorful decals pasted onto or directly behind the water source. Make sure decorations are water and vandal-proof.

*Activities displayed above could be transferrable across different community sites.