



Creating a Healthy Beverage Environment in Your University:

A Call to Action for Nursing Students in Boston

Colleges and universities are constantly seeking for ways to create a healthy environment for faculty, staff and students. Nursing students are in a unique position to tackle this important task as they are both current members of an academic community and future members of the healthcare community. One tremendous opportunity for achieving this lies in promoting healthier beverage choices, which have been shown to be a significant contributor to overall health. Nursing students can take a variety of approaches when promoting a healthy beverage environment in their schools.

1. **Provide General Education about Healthy Beverages:** Health centers and wellness staff are important resources for the overall health of staff, students and faculty. Information about healthy beverage choices should be readily available and part of wellness materials.
2. **Conduct an Assessment of Current Beverage Availability:** Conducting a thorough baseline assessment of the availability of sugar-sweetened beverages and water will identify areas for improvement and help build a case. The Boston Public Health Commission and Harvard School of Public Health have created a model tool for this kind of assessment.
3. **Educate Consumers at the Point of Purchase:** By providing nutrition information to consumers, organizations can empower them to make informed choices to support their own health. The Boston Public Health Commission has created simple and effective signage that uses a "Red-Yellow-Green" traffic light system for informing consumers about healthy beverages.
4. **Change Guidelines for Meeting and Procurement:** Many public and private institutions have developed nutrition standards for beverages that are purchased with institutional funds to be served at the institution's meetings and events.
5. **Promote Healthy Beverages through Pricing:** Decreasing the price of healthy options like bottled water and seltzer water and increasing the price of sugary drinks will promote healthier consumption while maintaining profits.
6. **Increase the Ratio of Healthy Drinks:** Providing more healthy options in vending machines and fountain drink dispensers will encourage healthier consumption while still allowing giving consumers the flexibility to occasionally chose less healthy options.
7. **Set Institution-Wide Nutrition Standards for Beverages:** Set nutritional guidelines for healthy beverages that all vending, retail and fountain drink dispensers would have to adhere to. Guidelines can be determined based on calories, sugar content, or other standards. Many vendors and distributors will voluntarily comply with new nutrition standards.

We Can Help

The Boston Public Health Commission is committed to helping you in your efforts to reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. Contact Colin O'Brien: cobrien@bphc.org or 617-419-3412.