

Case Study: Healthier Food - Healthier Beverages



Summary

National and local data identified childhood obesity as a growing problem.

Based on that research, Dayton Children's Hospital chose to address childhood obesity by eliminating sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) from their campus.

Since May 2014, they have been 100 percent SSB-free in the cafeteria and vending machines.

Dayton Children's Hospital

The Problem

Pediatric health assessments completed by Dayton Children's Hospital identified more than a third of local children are overweight or obese. Further, that data demonstrated this problem often goes undiagnosed and under-addressed, as this can be an uncomfortable and emotionally charged conversation. The uncertainty over ownership of the issue (hospital, school, family) furthers the difficulty surrounding this issue.

The Strategy Selected

Dayton Children's Hospital decided to take a proactive role of ownership in addressing childhood obesity. The team investigated multiple options for reducing obesity rates. Due to the robust research linking SSB consumption with increased weight gain, the team concluded that eliminating SSBs would have the greatest impact. This decision did not initially gain consensus - some of the leadership team wanted to go much further, while others wanted it to be a more relaxed policy. Ultimately, the executive leadership team made the final decision to formalize an official policy to eliminate SSBs.

Implementation Process

The SSB elimination policy was followed by an extensive communication plan, which was distributed in advance to all management. The CEO crafted a video message to explain the decision, with the core message emphasized that this decision was based on the most current research, science and community-needs assessment.

This policy was also incorporated into the Healthy Way Initiative, a multi-disciplinary team of over 150 members dedicated to improving employee health and addressing healthy lifestyles for all patients, as a strategy to increase support and identify champions to be the messengers for this new initiative. Each team member had a particular responsibility. For example, the dietitians provided education and support, while the dietetics and nutrition director helped execute and share the message with the staff directly impacted by the policy. The marketing department distributed the message more broadly to all staff, patients, and the community. The leadership team helped to reinforce the message and addressed complaints right away. One of the most important lessons learned from this process was that it opened up so many opportunities for educational conversations—with staff, patients, families and friends.

Looking for sugar-sweetened soda?

To stay consistent with our mission to promote the wellness of all patients, families and staff, Dayton Children's Hospital will not be selling or offering sugar-sweetened drinks starting May 1, 2014. We hope you will enjoy one of the healthier options we have available.



Sticker placed on every vending machine explaining what happened to the sugar-sweetened beverages.

About Dayton Children's Hospital

Licensed/Staffed beds - 155 beds

ED 73,000 visits/year and 290,000 children visits/year (including satellite sites)

Covers a 20-county region

The Team

C-Suite Leadership Team

Marketing Team

Director of Development

Organizational Nutrition and Healthy Way Officer

Director of Dietetics and Nutrition

Clinical Dietitians

Hospitalist

The initial implementation was followed up by a planned communication response: an article in the organizational newsletter (sample article at end of this case study), educational display in the cafeteria, and conducted focus groups of employees from all different departments through the healthy way committee. This identified groups that needed re-education or training. Even if there was resistance to the decision, once they heard the "why," the employees were on board. Finally, every vending machine had a sticker explaining what happened to the beverages.



The Healthy Way educational display in the Dayton Children's Hospital's cafeteria.

Benefits

- No SSBs in vending and cafeteria.
- Medically necessary spend on SSBs was less than four percent of total beverage spend.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

- The resistance was actually far less than anticipated. By fostering positive discussions using evidence-based research, many employees and families were receptive to this healthy lifestyle message.
- The messenger and the message mattered: CEO support was critical, as was being able to back up the policy with science. Having a multi-disciplinary team of well-respected individuals supported the message due to the array of content expertise. Trust in the decision makers was also an important factor.
- When those medically necessary exceptions arise, it is important to address those situations openly and be transparent about those decisions.
- This is ongoing. This initiative isn't "done." The commitment has to be maintained through constant communication.
- Finally, not all clinicians are trained to deliver public health messaging. Asking them to change their job roles and responsibilities is a culture change.

Dayton Children's Hospital is looking next to initiatives for tap water promotion through water bottle refill stations throughout the hospital.

GUEST ARTICLE: WHY WE'RE "CANNING" THE SODA

03-20-2014



Guest article by Rachel Riddiford, MS, RD, LD, organizational nutrition and healthy way officer

The press took off after we announced we're discontinuing the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages starting May 1. Why did we come to this decision?

Our Pediatric Health Assessment identified more than a third of local children are overweight or obese. Children and parents do not receive adequate guidance on the negative health effects from sugar-sweetened beverages from their pediatrician or school. Neither pediatricians nor schools feel confident identifying weight problems or educating on how to develop healthy lifestyle habits. We also know this is an emotional topic.

Interestingly, CVS Pharmacies recently decided to ban the sale of cigarettes for a similar reason. As they shape their identity to better resemble a health care provider, they cannot rationalize selling cigarettes even when it will cost them several billion dollars in sales. We cannot, in good conscience, sell or regularly offer sugar-sweetened beverages to a vulnerable population that looks to us to lead the way in health.

We couldn't stay idle and hope that someone else will take the painful issue of childhood obesity off of our list of concerns. We needed to join the community in addressing this problem.

Our organization has creaked and groaned through major culture changes in addressing childhood obesity for the last few years. This led to an organization-wide initiative called the Healthy Way Initiative to address this problem. I'm grateful to the hundreds of employees involved in Healthy Way for their involvement – and leadership – here at the hospital and in our community.

Every action taken by the Healthy Way Initiative is made in the best interest of patients and employees, including the decision to no longer offer sugar-sweetened beverages. There is simply no nutritional value in soda. Period.

Sugar-sweetened beverages are certainly not the only cause of overweight and obese children, but regular consumption is strongly associated with excess weight. If you choose to have a soda, you can bring it to work, but the hospital will no longer make money off of sugar-sweetened beverages.

We have made - and will continue to make - changes in the food and drinks available here at Dayton Children's to help make the healthy choice the easy choice. The lack of sugar-sweetened beverages makes the healthy choice the easy choice.

We know that all employees won't agree with this decision. Your comments are [welcome](#) and we'll share them on FOCUS to keep the dialogue going on this topic.