

Safe Water Access in Schools and Communities



Agua4All

In many rural California communities, inadequate infrastructure and contaminated water are commonplace. Access to safe drinking water is a basic human right and a foundation for healthy communities and schools, but this is not a reality for more than one million Californians. Contaminants such as arsenic can cause cancer, thyroid problems and other serious health issues.

But even in communities where the water meets federal and state requirements, adults and children alike often do not use the drinking fountains in schools, parks and other public places because they are either broken or dirty and unappealing. When reluctant to drink the public water supply, many low-income families spend more than 10 percent of their earnings to buy bottled water. Many also choose to consume sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) instead of water.

This is a serious health concern, particularly because diabetes in California has increased by 35 percent during the last 10 years. A UCLA Center for Health and Policy Research study found that nearly half of all California adults are prediabetic.

The California Endowment launched Agua4All in 2014, a pilot project in partnership with nonprofit organizations Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Community Water Center and Pueblo Unido CDC. The team installed nearly 200 water bottle filling stations in South Kern County and Eastern Coachella Valley and 173 point-of-use arsenic filters in three school districts including Arvin.

Agua4All raises awareness about California's drinking water crisis; builds community partnerships to install water bottle filling stations in schools and neighborhoods where they're needed most; identifies funding sources; and develops long-term solutions for California's water quality and access problems. Now that the pilot has concluded, RCAC plans to expand the project statewide to help other disadvantaged communities throughout rural California, including but not limited to Fresno, Kern, Lake, Merced, Riverside, San Diego and Tulare counties.

What is a water bottle filling station?



A water bottle filling station is a source where people access safe water through a fountain spout or by filling up reusable water bottles. In areas where safe water is not accessible, water bottle filling stations will include certified water treatment, like a point-of-use filter, to treat water on-site.

Project Benefits

Agua4All will:

- Fund water bottle filling stations in schools and community locations to help deliver safe, appealing, and affordable drinking water.
- Provide education on local water quality issues and promote healthy beverage choices.
- Ensure students stay hydrated, which has been linked to higher academic performance.
- Help schools comply with state and federal laws that require access to free, fresh drinking water during meal times (SB1413 and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act).
- Help residents save money spent on alternative safe water sources, like bottled water.
- Reduce disposable plastic bottle waste by encouraging tap water consumption and reusable water bottle use.
- Establish models and success stories for other schools, communities, funders and policy makers throughout California on how to access and promote safe water.



How You Can Help

- Like Agua4All on Facebook and follow us on Twitter #agua4all.
- Tell your friends and neighbors about the problem and why it matters for California's future.
- Urge your state legislator to demand safe water for all and work toward long-term water solutions that increase access to safe and affordable drinking water.
- Share information about Agua4All with your local school district or city manager to see if your community would be a good fit for the program.

Need water bottle filling stations in your school or community?

Complete and submit the questionnaire at:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DrinkingWaterInquirySurveyA4A>

For more information, contact us at:

Email: agua4all@rcac.org

Website: <http://agua4all.rcac.org/>