

Water

A Toolkit for Promoting
Water Intake in
Community Settings

First

DRINK WATER



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The Importance of Water Promotion

Drinking water is critical for the health and well-being of all people. Your site may have recently installed a new water source, or maybe you have existing water sources that aren't being used. How do you encourage people to drink from the water sources at your site? The Water First Toolkit will help you design and implement activities and messaging to promote water intake at your site.

Orientation to this guide

The first step to promote the water sources at your site is to choose the messages about drinking water you want to share with site users (students or community members who visit your site). In the [Define the Message](#) section, you will learn how to develop and communicate messages to motivate site users to drink water instead of sugary beverages. Examples of messages and materials used by other water promotion campaigns are sprinkled throughout the toolkit for inspiration. Next, in [Encourage Healthy Beverage Intake at Home](#), you can learn about how to extend your messages to impact site users' beverage intake not only at your site, but also at home. Then check out recommended promotional strategies; start by choosing one or two that seem achievable to implement at your site right now. Once you've gotten the ball rolling, you can add to your efforts with other strategies.

Some of the promotion strategies listed in this guide are more general and applicable to all sites, while others are more appropriate for specific types of sites. The following symbols at the top of each section will help you to identify activities that could work best for your site:



Why is it important to drink water?

Water is important for children's health and development. Currently, over half of all children in the United States are inadequately hydrated.¹ When schools and community sites provide drinking water as an alternative to sugary drinks such as soda, fruit drinks, and sports drinks, they promote overall health and development. Consumption of water, especially in place of sugary drinks, can help people:

- Limit excess weight gain²⁻⁹
- Prevent dental cavities¹⁰⁻¹²
- Stay hydrated, focused, and ready to learn¹³⁻¹⁵

Aren't many states experiencing a drought? Why are we telling people to drink more water?

By drinking tap water instead of packaged beverages, you are conserving water. It takes 3 liters of water to produce 1 liter of bottled water, not counting the water and energy it takes to produce the actual bottles.¹⁶ As many as 132 gallons of water are needed to make a 2-liter bottle of soda if you include the water used to grow ingredients such as sugar cane.¹⁷ Plus, not only does producing packaged beverages require a lot of water and energy, but it also generates a huge amount of plastic waste that ends up in landfills.

In the United States, most water is used for thermoelectric power and agricultural purposes.¹⁸ In California, for example, it is estimated that less than 10% of water is used residentially, and most of that water goes towards activities like watering plants, showering and washing clothes.¹⁸ Only a tiny percentage of California's water goes toward drinking water at the tap.



Is tap water safe to drink?

In most places, tap water is safe to drink. Public water systems are rigorously tested for lead and a number of other contaminants and are subject to state and federal standards. However, in a small number of communities in the U.S., the public water supply may be unsafe. In these areas, community members are informed that their water supply is unsafe and are provided guidance about remedial steps, such as purchasing filters or bottled water.

However, even in communities where the public water supply is safe, it may be important to test the drinking water at the tap for lead, which can enter water through lead pipes or solder. This is particularly true if plumbing systems are older or show signs of decay. Yet, a one-time test of drinking water outlets for lead may not be sufficient for detection since levels can fluctuate depending on a variety of factors.

In buildings with high risk of lead contamination in drinking water, you can take steps to reduce lead exposure. Strategies include: 1) running water lines for 2–3 minutes prior to use and especially after periods of not using water (you can use the flushed water for cleaning or watering plants), 2) using cold water instead of hot water for cooking or preparing formula or other beverages, and 3) using NSF-certified lead filters to reduce lead exposure (<http://bit.ly/1RUSGjW>).

If you are concerned about the general safety of the drinking water at your site, learn more about strategies and resources to monitor the safety of your site's water at: <http://bit.ly/1KroSZ6>. To learn more about how to manage lead in drinking water in schools, child care facilities, and other community sites, visit: <http://bit.ly/236nTsk>.

Define the Message

What to Say

The first step toward developing a promotion strategy is to decide what information about water to convey. That is, what should site users learn about water? What messages might motivate them to drink water instead of sugary beverages? Examples of messages are listed below:

Water is good for health

- Water has zero calories and no sugar
- Drinking more water and fewer sugary drinks can help prevent weight gain
- Drinking water instead of sugary drinks can help prevent dental cavities

Water can improve one's ability to learn and think

- Drinking water hydrates people so they can perform their best
- Drinking water may improve cognitive function

Water is inexpensive

- Tap water costs less than 1 cent per gallon, making it much less expensive than packaged beverages
- Drinking tap water instead of one bottled beverage per day can save up to \$350 a year

Water is safe

- Tap water is tested for contaminants more often than bottled water, and in most places in the U.S. is safe to drink

Water is tasty and refreshing

- Especially when chilled, water is tasty and refreshing
- Infusing water with fruit, vegetables, or herbs is an easy way to make water enticing without adding sugar

Drinking tap water instead of packaged beverages is better for the environment

- Drinking tap water conserves water and energy because no plastic bottles or packaging need to be produced
- Drinking tap water reduces the number of plastic bottles that end up in landfills

Water is easy to find

- Tap water is available almost anywhere, including schools, restaurants, parks, community centers, and homes

STUDIES SHOW....

At two Appalachian high schools, a student-designed and student-led intervention resulted in a decline in soda consumption and an increase in water consumption.¹⁹ A teen Advisory Council at each school designed a promotional campaign including a “commercial,” flyers, and t-shirts. Students read daily facts about limiting sugary beverage consumption during morning announcements and organized a 30-day challenge to drink only unsweetened beverages.



Who can help define the message

Ask site users (e.g. students) to help select your message and design promotional materials. This provides extra hands to help with promotion and increases the likelihood that materials and messages resonate with your community.

Special considerations

As you design your promotional materials, remember to make them:

- Simple (use more images than words)
- User-friendly (e.g. cartoons for young children)
- Positive (e.g. smiley faces)
- Colorful
- Durable (instead of using paper, consider laminating your signs or purchasing plastic or metal ones; waterproof banners work well outside)

STUDIES SHOW....

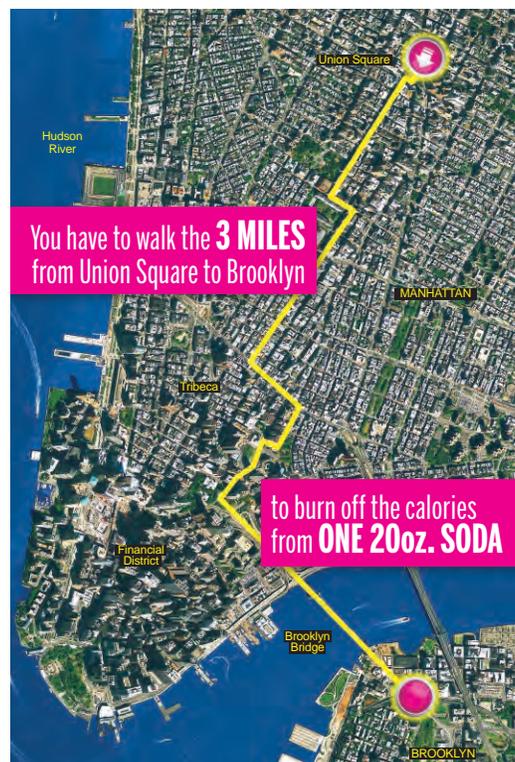
Positive messaging can work. In a Cincinnati, Ohio public school, placing a green smiling emoticon on healthy food options in the cafeteria was associated with increased student intake of plain fat-free milk and decreased intake of chocolate milk.²⁰

Consider labeling your water sources with positive messaging like Wally the Water Droplet.



Out-of-the-box messaging ideas

- Highlight the calories in sugary drinks by showing the amount of physical activity needed to burn off one drink (e.g. to burn off the calories in one can of soda, you need to walk from the high school to the health clinic and back)



This poster from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene illustrates the distance needed to walk to burn off the calories in different sugary beverages.²¹



This colorful sign at a park in Lamont, California uses simple language, positive imagery, and is made from a durable material suitable for outdoor use.

- A urine color chart in the bathroom, like the one below, allows site users to match the color of their urine with their level of hydration and serves as a helpful reminder to drink up.

Am I Hydrated?		Urine Color Chart
1		
2		If your urine matches the colors 1, 2, or 3, you are properly hydrated.
3		Continue to consume fluids at the recommended amounts
4		If your urine color is below the RED line, you are dehydrated and at risk for cramping and/or a heat illness! You need to drink more water!
5		
6		
7		
8		

- Use language that puts positive “peer pressure” on individuals to change their behavior (e.g. 45% of students brought their water bottles to school last week; did you bring your water bottle today?). Consider counting the number of site users who bring in reusable water bottles during one week and posting the number somewhere visible for all to see.

TIP

Use simple language. Make sure the words you use are easy for kids and adults with limited education to understand. For example:

COMPLEX:
Increasing your water consumption can yield improved health outcomes.

SIMPLE:
Drinking water helps you stay healthy.

Need more inspiration?

Find examples of messaging used in other water campaigns at:

- **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**
English and Spanish: <http://on.nyc.gov/1l99DaP>
- **Drink Up**
English and Spanish: <http://youarewhatyoudrink.org/media/>
- **Maryland Sugar Free Kids**
English: <http://www.sugarfreeskidsmd.org/>
- **Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity**
English and Spanish: <http://preventobesityil.org/>
- **Voices for Healthy Kids**
English and Spanish: <http://bit.ly/1EYQI8W>
- **Lexington Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition, Water First**
English: <http://drinkwaterfirst.org/>
- **Northern Nevada ReThink Your Drink**
English: www.rethinkyourdrinknevada.com

STUDIES SHOW....

Hotels guests who saw signage explaining, “almost 75% of guests who are asked to participate in our resource saving program by using their towels more than once” were significantly more likely to reuse their towels than guests who saw signage asking them to reuse their towels without normative peer pressure.²² Consider using messages that incorporate normative pressure in your water promotion campaign.

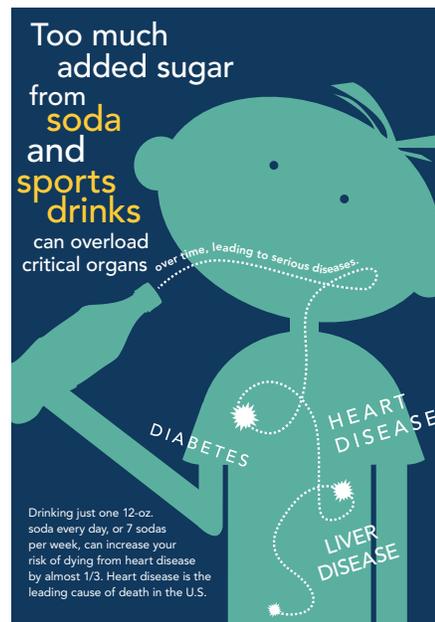


Encourage Healthy Beverage Intake at Home

As most sugary beverage consumption occurs at home, it is important to emphasize the importance of drinking healthy drinks at home. Fact sheets, flyers, phone calls and posting information on your organization's website are all good ways to spread your message to site users at home. The methods you choose to broadcast the messages will depend on who can help with implementation and the funding you have available.

Specific suggestions for how to reach site users include:

- Post information on the site's webpage or blog
- Send out a recorded message using an automated call system
- Write a notice in the site's newsletter
- Send flyers in the mail or in children's backpacks
- Hand out or display flyers at the front desk or reception area
- Deliver a presentation at a community gathering, PTA meeting or parent back-to-school night
- At schools, give presentations at school-wide assemblies or remind students during daily morning announcements
- At clinics, integrate messages about water consumption into patients' after-visit summary or electronic medical record



Use these posters and factsheets or adapt them to make your own:

- **Sequoia Healthcare District, Drink Water First for Thirst**
English: <http://bit.ly/1KCacly>
- **First 5 Santa Clara County, Potter the Otter**
English and Spanish: <http://bit.ly/1P4pDYB>
- **First 5 Contra Costa County, Sugar Bites**
English and Spanish: www.cutsugarydrinks.org/en/downloads
- **BANPAC, Sugar Savvy and ReThink Your Drink**
English and Spanish: <http://bit.ly/1Rx5wHz>
- **Prevent Obesity Illinois**
English: <http://bit.ly/1YvNJq>
Spanish: <http://bit.ly/1VQ8y9G>
- **Voices for Healthy Kids**
English: <http://bit.ly/1HeDHJo>
Spanish: <http://bit.ly/1DdFl2j>
- **Santa Clara County, Drowning in Sugar**
English: <http://bit.ly/1K6g61u>
Spanish: <http://bit.ly/1MAiAbW>
- **University of California, San Francisco, Sugar Science**
English: www.sugarscience.org/resource-kit

Use Art to Drink Smart

Art is a fun and creative way to showcase messages that encourage smarter drink choices. Below are a few examples of artistic strategies to promote water intake.



A mural in Oakland, California, created as part of the Estria Foundation's Water Writes project, portrays ways that Oakland youth are choosing healthy alternatives in order to conserve water.²³

Paint a Community Mural



Create a mural next to one of your site's water sources to showcase why water is important to your community. If designing a mural is too daunting, consider a smaller scale project such as painting the filter box next to the fountain. The design process should be a collaborative activity that includes students at the school or members of the community. The process of selecting a message, designing, and painting may take some time, but this public artwork will have a long-lasting impact. For guidance on how to create a community mural, see: <http://bit.ly/1fKnaae>



The Folsom Cordova Unified School District in Sacramento, California installed a hydration station in the cafeteria and painted a simple mural backsplash with promotional messages.

Door Decorating Contest



Have students or employees compete to see who can decorate a classroom or office door with the most creative and compelling message about drinking water. The winners could receive a gift card to a local restaurant, store or movie theater or a healthy catered lunch.



At a middle school near Los Angeles, California, students decorated their classroom doors to promote water consumption. The winning homeroom received a lunch party with deli sandwiches and healthy snacks.

Logo Design Competition



Host a competition to see which student or employee can create the most original and effective logo, poster or water bottle design to promote intake of water at your site. Involving students and/or employees in the design process ensures that your message resonates with your target audience.



Oakland, California middle school students submitted creative logo designs for a school-wide competition. The winning design was printed on reusable water bottles distributed to all students.

Arts Showcase



Allow students to show off their creative side by hosting a water arts showcase. Students can write a play or song, direct a movie or music video or take a photo that illustrates the important role of drinking water in their lives. Partner with students and teachers in the school's art, music, photography, and digital media classes. For example, students can make water bottle logos in a digital media class to showcase at the event!



Oakland, California teens created a rap music video called "Drinkin' That Water" that highlights the benefits of drinking water as well as the negative effects of drinking soda in a fun, relatable way.

Make a Splash with Simple Promotional Activities

Simple activities and initiatives can make a big difference in motivating site users to drink water. Below are a few examples of easy activities to promote water intake.

Water Week



Dedicate a week to celebrating water. Incorporate games, prizes, competitions, assemblies and lessons to make it fun and educational. At schools, you could also consider making one day of your Spirit Week focused on water consumption. At the library, you can set up a display of books related to water.

Small Giveaways



Inexpensive giveaways such as pencils, stickers, magnets and temporary tattoos that feature messages about drinking water can be a great way to encourage water consumption. Colorful crazy straws are another giveaway that makes drinking water fun.

At clinics, you can hand out water-related prizes to children at visits. At schools and child care facilities, you can set up an incentive system to reward students for drinking water from a site water source or reusable water bottle. Assign a student leader or parent volunteer “water duty” once a week to hand out giveaways to children seen drinking water during lunch or recess.



One study found that “random” reinforcement—handing out small prizes on different days twice per week—increased students’ consumption of healthy food and beverage options at lunchtime.²⁰

Water Contract



Invite individuals or families to sign contracts pledging to drink more water and fewer sugary beverages. Staff can help site users set personalized, realistic goals for how to change their beverage habits. Site users and staff can track their beverage consumption on paper or using a smart phone application such as WaterBalance or WaterLogged. Find these applications at: <http://apple.co/1SdnSoE> and <http://apple.co/1hoUF3>

rethink YOUR DRINK PLEDGE

I promise to drink water when I am thirsty.

I promise to read the food label on the back of my beverage container so I can choose healthy beverages.

I promise to drink more _____ over the next ____ week(s) and less _____.

I promise this because _____

Signature _____ Date _____

CHAMPIONS for CHANGE For CaFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. Funded by USDA SNAP-EI, an equal opportunity provider and employer. Visit www.CaChampionsforChange.net for healthy tips. -California Department of Public Health

CDC PH

Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative (BANPAC) developed a simple water contract for teens. See more at: <http://bit.ly/1O7jg5R>

Dress Up Your Water Source



Make your water source look more appealing with metal plaques or colorful decals pasted onto or directly behind the water source. If your water source is outside, make sure your decorations are water and vandal-proof.

Water Breaks



Incorporate regular water breaks into the daily schedules of students and staff. Schedule a time for each class to visit a water source at least once a day to fill up water bottles or take a few sips of water. Remind all students to visit a water source before returning to class after lunch or recess.

A “Prescription” for Water



Health care providers can 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. This tool can also help remind health care providers to discuss the importance of healthy beverage consumption and adequate hydration during appointments.



In San Francisco, simple decals with information written in multiple languages are used to decorate a public tap station.



At the San Jose Children’s Discovery Museum, a colorful decal featuring Potter the Otter adorns the wall behind a newly installed water bottle filling station.

Educate about the Benefits of Drinking Water

Highlight the benefits of drinking water instead of sugary drinks through classroom lessons, worksheets, and demonstrations. Here are a few examples of ways to educate site users and staff about the importance of healthy beverage choices.

Water Curriculum



Incorporate lessons and activities about water and other beverages into classroom, summer or afterschool activities. Lessons and activities can be tailored to specific age groups and integrated into the curricula for diverse subject areas, from science to the humanities. Some existing materials meet state curriculum standards, and many can be modified to help support your school's educational standards.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has developed a curriculum called “Our Water” to teach elementary students about water issues in the San Francisco Bay Area. The lessons support California State Standards.

TIP

Have students make presentations about water at school-wide assemblies and events. Students may be more likely to absorb messages coming from their peers than from adults.

Consider adapting these existing materials for use at your site:

- **BANPAC Sugar Savvy:**
Elementary School: <http://bit.ly/2041s3w>
Middle School: <http://bit.ly/1LsoAht>
High School: <http://bit.ly/1UluxDw>
- **San Francisco Public Utilities Commission:**
www.SFWater.org/Education
- **National Ground Water Association:**
<http://bit.ly/1grt3JP>

Activity Worksheets



Educational worksheets can be completed in class, during afterschool or summer programs, made available in waiting rooms or sent home with children to complete with their families.

The BANPAC “Search for the Sugar” worksheet is one example of a handout you can provide children to teach them about the sugar content of some of their favorite foods and drinks.

Use the following worksheets or adapt them to make your own:

- **BANPAC Sugar Savvy puzzles and worksheets:** <http://bit.ly/1JfSm8b>
- **BANPAC Potter the Otter worksheets:** <http://bit.ly/1K8eswf>

Staff Training



Staff can serve as important role models for site users, especially children. Educating staff about the benefits of drinking water is a first step in educating the clients or students that your site serves. In your training, include information about the health benefits of water consumption, water quality, and the location of water sources at your site. Consider offering a healthy lunch or organizing a raffle during the training to encourage attendance.

Child care facilities can use NAP SACC’s staff training materials on a variety of topics related to physical activity and nutrition, including healthy beverage consumption. Begin by using NAP SACC’s free self-assessment tool to compare the site’s nutrition and physical activity practices to best practice standards. Find the tool at: <http://bit.ly/2ocXh4i>. For additional child care staff training materials, check out: <https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/trainers/>

Sugar Savvy Demonstration



The Sugar Savvy demonstration provides powerful visuals to illustrate the amount of sugar in common drinks. Conduct a demonstration at a staff training, community or parent back-to-school night, during class, afterschool activities or summer programs. A presentation guide can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1bCDqX>



Sugar cubes can be used in the Sugar Savvy demonstration to show the shocking amount of sugar in many popular beverages.



During a water taste test challenge in Harvard University housing, residents sampled three unmarked water containers and guessed if they could tell the difference between tap water, a popular brand of bottled water, and an expensive “designer” bottled water.²⁴

Water Taste Test Challenge



Host a blind taste test to rate tap water vs. bottled water based on taste, cleanliness, color, and smell. You can also add fruit or herbs to water to see if site users prefer the taste. Conduct a demonstration at your site’s community or parent back-to-school night or during class, after school activities or summer programs. A step-by-step guide to hosting your own challenge can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1DdLH1F>

Incorporate Multimedia Promotion

Songs and videos can be shown to students in class, on television screens in waiting rooms, or provided to parents and students on CDs to take home and watch or listen to on their own. Books can be read to students in class, made available in waiting rooms or sent home with children to read with their families.

Share the Love Clip



This 3-minute video showcases the health impacts of drinking sugary drinks and highlights ways to make water the easy drink of choice. It is available in English and Spanish and culturally relevant for Latino families with young children.

Find the video online in English: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajjDoKIN7Lw and in Spanish: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpOQ2sHD5u8

Potter the Otter: A Tale About Water



This illustrated book was designed by First 5 Santa Clara County as a tool to educate parents, child care providers, and young children about making healthier drink choices. It is available in many languages including English and Spanish and recommended for children in preschool and elementary school.



Find the tale of Potter the Otter in English and Spanish online: <http://www.pottertheotter.com/>

Andy-Z Music Video



This music video targeted at preschool and elementary school students accompanies the original song, “Drink More Water!” and encourages children to drink more water and less juice. Children can learn the moves and dance along!



Watch the video (available only in English): <http://bit.ly/1fZOKiL> and the instructional video teaching the song’s accompanying motions: <http://bit.ly/1KQgfZh>

A Taste of Home



The Bigger Picture is a collaboration between Youth Speaks and the University of California, San Francisco Center for Vulnerable Populations, empowering youth to speak out about the rising epidemic of Type 2 Diabetes. This video, available in English and Spanish, is narrated by a young Latina woman who urges Latino families to cut sugary drinks out of their diets.



Find the video online in English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuhhxTj5odo> and in Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o6oopgvb1g>

Provide Reusable Water Bottles and Cups

Vessels provide site users with an opportunity to consume more than just a few sips of water at a time. There are two main types of vessels you can provide site users: reusable water bottles and cups.



At a child care facility in San Jose, California, staff keep children’s water bottles in a basket in the classroom that is taken outside during playtime.



Pasting students’ pictures on reusable water bottles is a fun way to help children recognize their bottles and prevent bottles from getting lost.

Reusable Water Bottles



Reusable water bottles provide an easy and eco-friendly way for site users to carry water with them throughout the day. If you don’t have sufficient funds to provide free water bottles to all site users, consider offering them as prizes during a “Water Week” or through a raffle. You could also make your own reusable water bottles and sell them as a healthy fundraiser for your site.

At schools and child care facilities, bottles can be kept on-site (e.g., in the cafeteria or classrooms) or students can bring them to/from school. If kept on-site, work with teachers, staff, parent volunteers and student leaders to create a plan for cleaning the vessels. Consider also adding reusable water bottles to the back-to-school list.

At health clinics, consider handing out reusable water bottles to children and families at their visits. This will help reinforce the health provider’s message about the importance of drinking water.

For more information on what to consider when purchasing reusable bottles including more detailed information about specific products (e.g., brand, size, cost, safety) and how to keep them clean, see: <http://bit.ly/1krhSCo>

Reusable and Single-Use Cups



Provide cups next to the site's water sources as an easy way for site users to consume more than just a few sips of water. Single-use cups cost about four cents each. At schools, consider building single-use cups into the annual food service budget.

If you provide single-use cups next to your water source, keep a trash can close by to decrease mess. Make sure facilities staff regularly empty the trash and re-stock cups.

If there is space, consider mounting a cup dispenser on the wall next to the water source, or providing reusable cups that are washed and stored overnight at the site.

At child care facilities, offer water on the table at mealtimes using child-sized pitchers. Children can improve their motor skills while pouring water for themselves.

For more information on what to consider when purchasing single-use cups including more detailed information about specific products (e.g., brand, size, cost), see: <http://bit.ly/1NnX2oh>



At an elementary school in San Jose, California, disposable cups are part of the food service budget and are available at all times next to the hydration station. A small trash can is placed directly next to the fountain to minimize litter.

STUDIES SHOW....

In Boston schools, when signage and single-use cups were provided next to water stations, the amount of water consumed per student tripled and the number of students drinking water doubled.²⁵

TIP

Consider the environment. If you decide to offer single-use cups, consider providing those made from biodegradable materials such as plant starch instead of material like Styrofoam, which takes approximately 50 years to decompose in a landfill.



One Michigan Avenue East
Battle Creek, MI 49017-4012 USA

269.969.2079
communications@wkkf.org
www.wkkf.org/Michigan

fb.com/WKKelloggFoundation
@WK_Kellogg_Fdn

