Obesity Prevention success stories

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

Donna McDuffie, MPH, RD, LN
Healthy Beverages in Health Care

Healthy *Beverages in Health Care is a collaborative effort in Minnesota to increase access to and consumption of healthy beverages. Specifically, the project is focusing on getting hospitals to eliminate sugar-sweetened beverages and to promote drinking water. The collaborative hopes to focus on other settings in the future, from schools to worksites to child care centers.*

Donna McDuffie, MPH, RD, LN played a critical role in launching this project. Donna is a nutrition coordinator with the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Division of the Minnesota Department of Health. She worked closely with Michelle Strangis, the Health Department's Cancer Policy Coordinator. Donna reports, "We did an environmental scan and discovered there was no political support for this work in the governor's office or with our traditional partners."

The two forged ahead by bringing together staff in other Health Department divisions who have an interest in reducing sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and promoting drinking water to see what they could accomplish collectively. Staff representing nutrition, worksite wellness, healthcare, oral health, and cancer came together in late 2012 to discuss how they could collaborate and make the best use of the available funding. Because there was so much resistance to limiting beverage choice, the group agreed to launch their project with a focus on hospitals and other health care settings, as the mission of these entities is to promote health. This working group became the Healthy Beverage Coalition.

The Coalition also recruited partners from outside the Health Department – the Minnesota Cancer Alliance, the Public Health Law Center, and the Institute for a Sustainable Future (ISF). ISF was already working to phase out sugar-sweetened beverages in hospitals around the state. The Coalition contracted with the Public Health Law Center to develop a number of resources and to provide in-person technical assistance to Community Transformation Grantees (CTG) and also to grantees in Minnesota's Statewide Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). These partners made a huge difference in moving the project forward.

The Public Health Law Center developed the **Minnesota Healthy Beverages in Health Care Toolkit** for the Coalition to use in its campaign. The toolkit includes fact sheets explaining how sugary drinks contribute to obesity and

Pictured: Donna McDuffie, MPH, RD, LN

About Donna

Donna is the Nutrition Coordinator with the Office of Statewide Health Improvement Initiatives at the Minnesota Department of Health. Before joining the health department in 2006, Donna was an Extension Educator and an Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota.

Donna enjoys spending time with family and friends. She worked with her neighbors to build a huge community garden. She also maintains her own garden, which includes three raised beds for vegetables, four varieties of apple trees, a cherry tree and lots of berries and flowers! Donna is a Volunteer Ranger for the National Parks Service Trails and Rails program where she tells interesting facts and stories to passengers on the Amtrak train between Minneapolis and Chicago!

on the importance of drinking water, guidance on how to set up a healthy beverage program, and much more. With toolkit in hand, the Coalition publicly launched its program with a webinar in April 2013, called **Reducing Sugary Drinks in Healthcare Facilities: Starting the Conversation**. Close to 300 people nationwide participated in the webinar, including hospital administrators, grantees, and many others.

The Coalition team presented additional webinars, including one for a national audience of state cancer control program staff and one for Utah's cancer program staff. In addition, the team provided technical assistance to the CTG and SHIP grantees as well as to stakeholders in two other states. The toolkit has been a key resource in the Coalition's work to support these community-based programs. The Minnesota Hospital Association invited the Coalition to create a video to educate its Board about the project. The **video is posted on the Association's website**. These videos are now shown at hospital board of trustee meetings all over the state!

The Minnesota Cancer Alliance and the Health Department also developed a **fact sheet** on the connection between obesity and cancer and a **sugar-sweetened beverage policy brief**. The team distributes these documents at their meetings and presentations. They have gotten great feedback on these resources.

Successes and Major Outcomes

Although Donna says that the project is still too new to report measurable impacts, the Coalition has much to celebrate already! Several hospital systems in the state are now working to phase out all sugar-sweetened beverages. And, the Minnesota legislature voted this year to re-fund the Statewide Health Improvement Plan for $35 million. This allocation was enough to fund every county health board in the state that wants to join in the healthy beverages project. Eighty-six out of Minnesota's 87 counties applied for and received SHIP funding.

In addition, Donna says, "We seem to have reached a tipping point in Minnesota. Where we once had push back in the work to reduce sugary beverage consumption, we now have significant support! Hospital administrators are welcoming the logic and strategies behind reducing access to sugary beverages."

Donna also cites the involvement of all of the internal and external partners as being critical to the project moving forward and making meaningful change in Minnesota.

The Coalition's work is continuing, with many more meetings and presentations scheduled. Says the Public Health Law Center's Julie Ralston Aoki, "What has been truly wonderful about the experience in Minnesota is

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If you would like to find out more about Minnesota's Healthy Beverages in Health Care, you can contact Donna at **651-201-5493 or donna.mcduffie@state.mn.us**.

that we've had so many groups working on the project from different sectors — the state health department, local health departments, the state's health plans, the Minnesota Hospital Association, hospital staff and more!"

Findings and Lessons Learned

The Coalition received great feedback on a training and technical assistance workshop they held with hospital administrators. The evaluations revealed that before the workshop 46 percent of participants said that they were interested in exploring a beverage policy to reduce or eliminate sugary drink sales in their facility. After the workshop, a whopping 92 percent said they were interested in developing a healthy beverage policy!

The Coalition also received these responses on the evaluations:

"It was great to learn about this powerful blend of regional, national, and local efforts related to healthy beverages — and healthy eating — at healthcare facilities. It was important to hear how even seemingly small changes and the slow process of relationship development can set the stage for revolutionary change in how we think about healthcare. Thank you for organizing such a great event!"

"It was helpful to hear about other facilities that are looking at their policies for food and beverages and how they have gained support from administration and other employees."

Challenges or Barriers

When Donna and Michelle started this project, they were up against both research and popular media reports that a majority of the public is against policies that restrict individual choice, such as a soda tax or limits on serving sizes. They knew that there was also resistance to worksite policies that limit choice. Donna and Michelle met that challenge by focusing their work on hospitals and health care facilities. They emphasized the community benefits and encouraged hospitals to use a healthy beverage policy in their hospital as part of their community health improvement plan under the Affordable Care Act. Their hope is that they are "softening the ground" for working on reducing sugary beverage consumption in other settings.

The Important Role of the Public Health Nutritionist

Donna played a critical role in bringing together key partners to launch and implement this project. In addition, as a public health nutritionist, Donna provided important information about the evidence base for eliminating sugar-sweetened beverages and promoting drinking water as an obesity prevention tool.

ASPHN in Action

ASPHN is a non-profit membership organization that provides state and national leadership on food and nutrition policy, programs and services aimed at improving the health of our population. Our vision is to create new environmental norms where healthy eating and active living are the easy and natural choices for all Americans.

At ASPHN, we build our members' skills as public health nutritionists by providing key resources and professional development.

To learn more about ASPHN, please visit us on the web at **www.asphn.org**.

ASPHN
Advancing Health Through Leadership
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