

# SUGAR SWEETENED BEVERAGE POLICY TOOLKIT

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The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative is a program of *Live Well San Diego: Healthy Works* and implemented by Community Health Improvement Partners. This work supports *Live Well San Diego*, the County vision for a region that is Building Better Health, Living Safely, and Thriving.

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# INTRODUCTION

[The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative \(COI\)](#) is a multi-sector coalition with the mission of reducing and preventing childhood obesity by advancing policy, systems, and environmental change through collective impact.

The COI has prepared this toolkit in hopes that it will provide information useful to jurisdictions in improving the long-term health of their residents. The COI hopes policymakers and their constituents find the toolkit useful in addressing the overconsumption of sugar-sweetened beverages that can lead to an increased risk of chronic disease, placing a financial burden on both constituents and local governments.

Inside this toolkit, you will find background information on the health risks associated with the consumption of added sugars, a menu of actions local governments can use to address the issue, and tools and resources to assist local governments in taking action.

How to use this toolkit:

- Use it as a guide for prompting discussions and actions
- Consider implementing one or all of the included strategies
- Review the included resources to strategize implementation

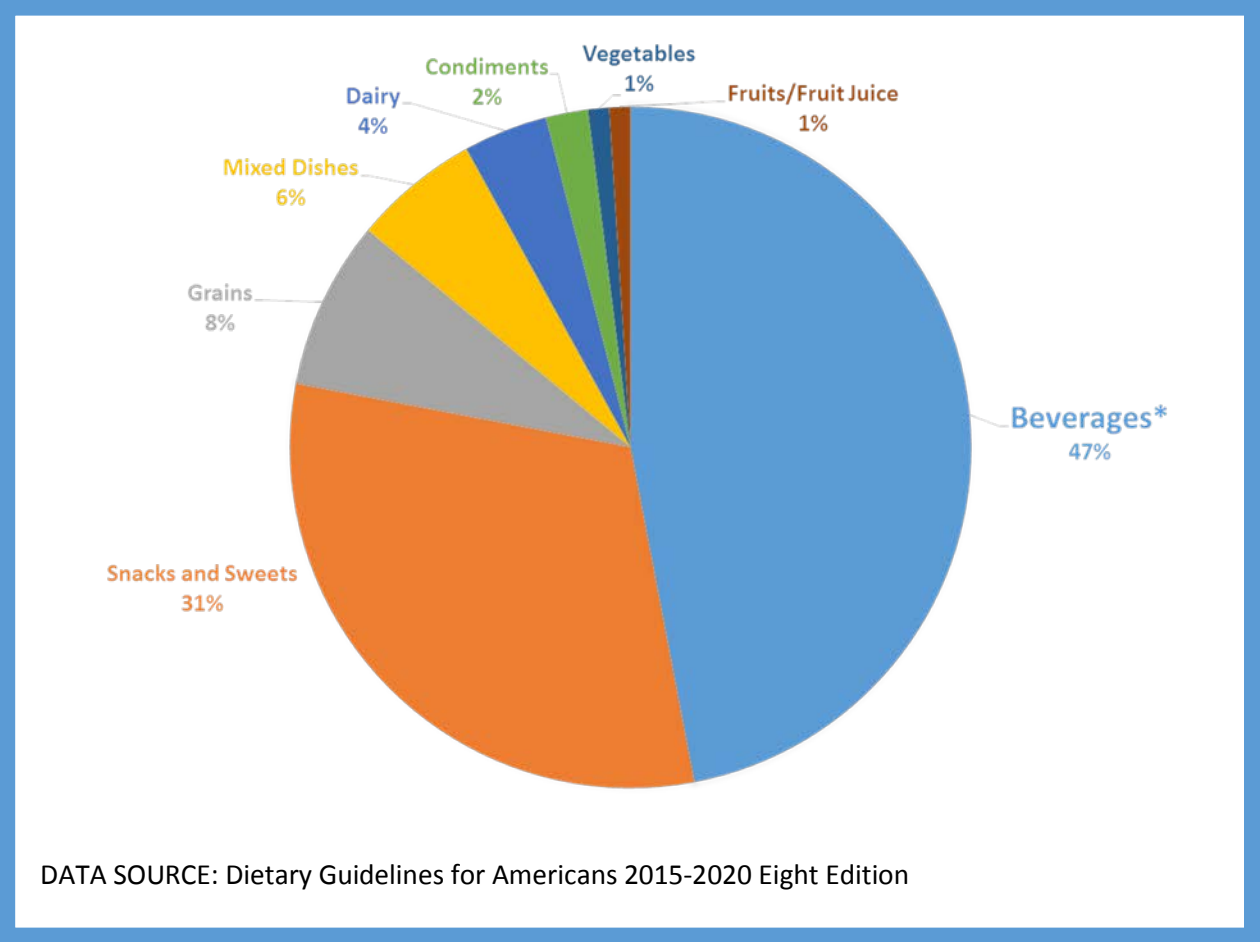
The [COI](#) and its partners are available to assist policymakers in their exploration and identification of policy options.

## BACKGROUND

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are any liquids that are sweetened with added sugars. Examples of added sugars include brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, dried cane sugar, raw sugar, dextrose, fructose, glucose, honey, lactose, molasses, and sucrose.<sup>i</sup> Added sugars have been shown to affect health by increasing the risk of obesity, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, and tooth erosion.<sup>ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,viii</sup> As shown in Figure 1, SSBs constitute the largest source of

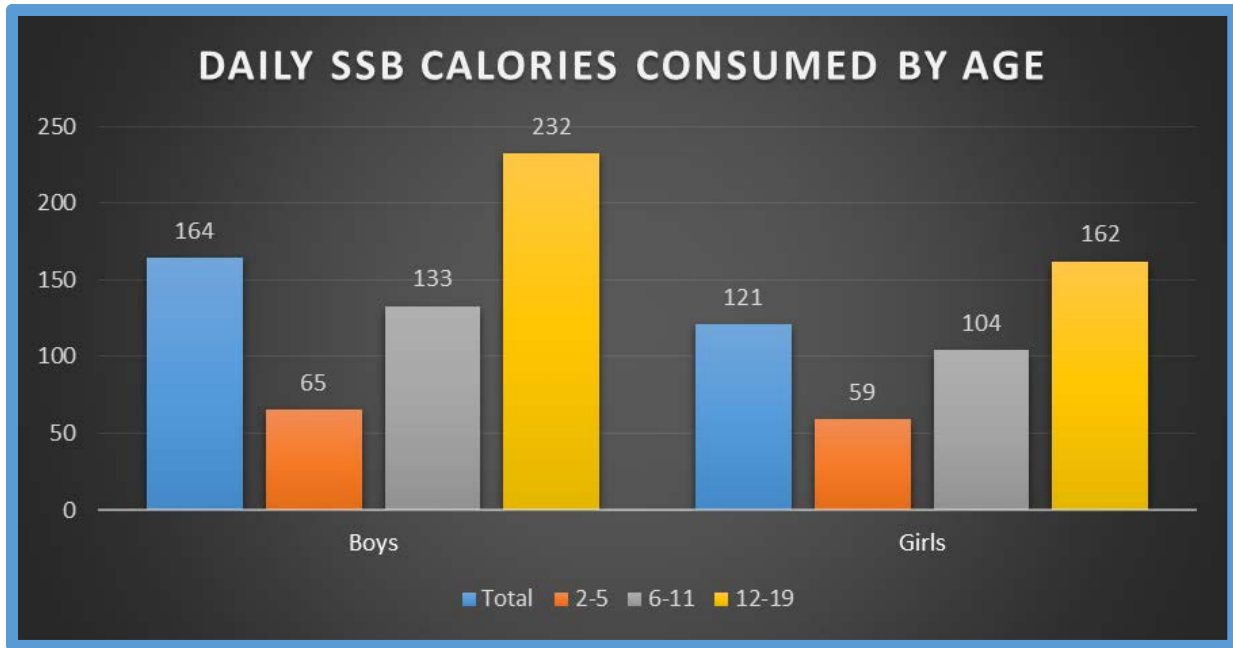
added sugar in the American diet.<sup>ix</sup> Drinks that are considered SSBs include soda, fruit drinks, sweetened bottle waters, sports drinks, energy drinks, sweetened coffee, sweetened tea, and horchata.

Figure 1. Sources of added sugars in American diet



Consumption of SSBs by children in the United States has increased significantly from an average of 88 calories per day in 1978 to a current day average of more than 140 calories.<sup>x,xi</sup> Between 2011 and 2014, nearly 63% of youth consumed at least one SSB daily. The number of calories consumed a day in the United States from SSBs ranges widely by sex and age as can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Total number of daily calories from SSBs for youth aged 2-19 years by sex and age



Teens consumed an average of 226 calories a day from SSBs, making it the top calorie source in their diet, beating out pizza (213 calories per day)<sup>xii</sup>. The percentage of total daily calories consumed from SSBs was higher in non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic white, and Hispanic children than for non-Hispanic Asian children.<sup>ix</sup>

Data from 2010 indicates that 37 percent of African-American and 22 percent of Hispanic-American high-school students drank *three or more* SSBs a day, compared to only 20% of White students.<sup>xiii</sup> In California, Latino, Multi-Racial, and African-American children were more likely to consume two or more SSBs a day, while Whites and Asians/Others were least likely.<sup>xiv</sup> Compounding this, the beverage industry disproportionately targets low-income and people of color through marketing.<sup>xv,xvi</sup>

## CHULA VISTA CITY PROFILE

At Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD), approximately 40% of students are overweight or obese. In addition, nearly 4 in 10 (38.9%) children and teens in the region drink one or more sugar-sweetened beverage every day.

According to the County of San Diego, Health & Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, Community Health Statistics Unit (CHSU), in 2010 the County of San Diego overall had a lower rate of diabetes deaths per 100,000 than both the nation or the State of CA at 19.1 vs. 20.8 and 19.7 respectively. However, the City of Chula Vista had a rate of diabetes deaths significantly higher at 38 per 100,000. Additionally, the County of San Diego overall had a lower rate of coronary heart disease (CHD) deaths than both the nation and the State of CA at 104.3 vs. 123.6 and 120.8 respectively. However, the City of Chula Vista had an extremely high rate of coronary heart disease deaths at 188.3 per 100,000. These are indicators of a significant chronic disease burden that must be addressed through a wide range of strategies at multiple levels. More than one million individuals are affected by diabetes, hypertension, or heart disease in San Diego County with an estimated economic burden greater than three *BILLION* dollars.<sup>xvii</sup>

## HOW CAN JURISDICTIONS ADDRESS CONSUMPTION?

With evidence showing the risk of chronic disease related to the consumption of added sugars, it is important that municipalities are part of the solution to reduce the burden placed on their residents. This toolkit highlights several strategies jurisdictions can implement to address this growing concern. Regardless of the strategy or combination of strategies chosen, there are a few important steps to take.

1. Engage the community. Whether you are considering a tax on SSBs or an awareness campaign, it is important to listen to the community to learn about their concerns and experiences. This can help build consensus and create advocates within a community around a policy or provide

meaningful insight from the community to help build an awareness campaign.

2. Identify a clear and consistent message. How you communicate about the policy or behavior you would like to change is important. After engaging the community, it is important to clearly define the issue and the desired outcome.
3. Disseminate your message. After engaging the community and crafting key messages, it is important to effectively promote your message. Some ways you can disseminate your message is by engaging with decision makers, attending city council meetings, and using the media. Being concise and direct is important. Decision makers are often times busy and do not always have time to engage in long discourse concerning an issue.

We have included a [variety of resources](#) that can support your efforts to reduce access to and consumption of SSBs in your municipality.

## STRATEGIES TO REDUCE SSB CONSUMPTION

The strategies identified in this toolkit are either evidence-based or recommended by most major public health organizations, or promising practice offering innovation or great promise in reducing SSB consumption.

### Public Awareness Campaigns

From tobacco use to physical inactivity, public awareness campaigns have been used as a public health tool to change individual behavior for many years. Research has shown that public awareness campaigns may be a successful strategy in reducing SSB consumption.<sup>xviii</sup>

Awareness campaigns, including media intended for both small and large

Box 1. Key Public Health Resource



**Key Public Awareness Resource**

 **KICK THE CAN** GIVING THE BOOT TO SUGARY DRINKS

Includes a comprehensive list of sample SSB awareness campaigns from municipalities throughout the U.S.

audiences, may be effective in increasing knowledge related to the risks of SSB consumption to a large number of people with a relatively small amount of funding.

A SSB awareness campaign is a comprehensive effort, including various forms of communication to reduce the consumption of sugary beverages. Public awareness campaigns should include well-defined messages and a conclusive call to action that relates to your target audience. Visit Kick the Can referenced in Box 1 to see a comprehensive list of sample awareness campaigns related to sugar-sweetened beverages.

We have also included a number of [public awareness campaign resources](#) at the end of this document to help get you started.

## SSB Tax

Similar to public awareness campaigns, taxes have been used as a public health tool to successfully affect behavior by raising consumer costs. Taxes have been shown to be an especially effective policy tool for reducing smoking participation among youth and persons of low socioeconomic status.<sup>xix</sup> Taxing SSBs can raise the price of unhealthy beverages, and make water a more cost-effective option.

There are two types of SSB taxes that jurisdictions may choose to adopt. Sales taxes, which are applied at the point of purchase, and excise taxes, which are levied on the manufacture and then generally built into the retail price of SSBs. Excise taxes are thought to be

*Box 2. Key SSB Tax Resource*



The graphic features a blue header with the text 'Key SSB Tax Resource'. Below the header is a white box containing three stylized, colorful plastic bottles (one red, one blue, one purple) and the text 'BEST PRACTICES IN DESIGNING LOCAL TAXES ON SUGARY DRINKS'. Underneath this text is the logo for 'ChangeLab Solutions and Healthy Food America' and the date 'March 2016'. A blue footer contains the text 'Provides best practice guidance in designing local SSB taxes'.



more effective when trying to change behavior.<sup>xx</sup> To learn more about best practices in designing local taxes on sugary drinks click on the link in Box 2.

Revenue generated from SSB taxes should be earmarked to be reinvested into the community to fund public health programs or provide additional resources for education.

To explore more about SSB taxes, check out the [SSB tax resources](#) on this topic included at the end of the toolkit.

## Default Beverages with Kids' Meal

Restaurants play an increasingly pivotal role in the American diet. Nearly 34% of children and teenagers (ages 2-19) eat fast food on a given day, and researchers have found that beverages add about 179 more calories to meals.<sup>xxi,xxii</sup>

Restaurants typically offer soda as the default beverage with kids' meals, although several national chains have already voluntarily replaced soda with

healthier options. Research has shown that default choices matter, especially for poorer, less educated individuals.<sup>xxiii</sup> If SSBs are replaced as the default beverage served with kids' meals, this could lead to a reduced consumption of calories from sugary beverages and possibly help curb childhood obesity rates.

Several cities in the state of California, including Stockton, Long Beach, Davis, and Perris have ordinances in place that require the default beverage included with a

Box 3. Key Default Beverage Resource

### Key Default Beverage Resource

or·di·nance

*noun*

This link provides model ordinance language from the American Heart Association that can easily be adapted for use by any municipality.

kids' meal be healthy. A model ordinance can be found by clicking on the link provided in Box 3.

To get started making healthy beverages the default option with kids' meals, visit the [kids' meal resources](#) section at the end of this document.

## Limit SSBs on Government Property

Local governments can also reduce access to and consumption of SSBs by not allowing unhealthy beverages to be sold on their properties, including parks, recreation facilities, and

libraries. One study revealed that vending machines on state and local property contain primarily unhealthy products, including nearly 60% of beverages.<sup>xxiv</sup> This is despite evidence

showing that consumers want healthy options and are willing to pay more for them.<sup>xxv</sup> Research conducted in the state of California and city of Chicago shows that people will choose healthy options when they are available and that providing healthy vending options may increase revenue.<sup>xxvi,xxvii</sup> To see a list of key components of food procurement and vending policies, visit the Public Health Law Center by clicking on the link in Box 4.

Many jurisdictions across California, including San Francisco, Pasadena, Redding, and the Counties of San Diego and Monterey have adopted healthy vending policies that limit or remove SSBs from their vending machines.

[Resources](#) to help your municipality limit SSBs on their property can be found in the resources section at the end of the toolkit.

Box 4. Key Default Beverage Resource



The graphic features a blue header with the title "Key Default Beverage Resource" in white. Below the header is a horizontal strip with four images: the Public Health Law Center logo, a group of diverse people, hands holding fresh produce, and a child drinking from a water fountain. The text "HEALTHY VENDING AND PROCUREMENT" is written in white on a dark red background at the bottom of the strip. Below the strip, the text "Provides key components of food procurement and vending policies." is displayed in white on a blue background.

## **CONCLUSION**

SSBs are the largest source of added sugar in the American diet and have been shown to increase the risk of obesity and a variety of chronic diseases. With data showing SSB consumption has increased significantly in the past 40 years, jurisdictions across the country are taking steps to address this public health concern. Municipalities are uniquely positioned to address SSB consumption and improve the health of residents in their community. By using well-designed strategies, municipalities can encourage residents to choose healthier beverages, while also encouraging businesses to promote better beverage choices.

# RESOURCES

## General Resources for Addressing Consumption of SSBs

[The Sugar-sweetened Beverage Playbook](#) from ChangeLab Solutions and the National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (nplan) outlines a 10-strategy path to reduce SSB consumption and improve health.

[Don't Sugarcoat our Future](#) is a toolkit from Voices for Healthy Kids is designed to provide tactics to help your community reduce consumption of sugary beverages and, more specifically, to promote pricing strategies that will discourage consumption of SSBs.

Healthy Food America's [Sugar Advocacy Toolkit](#) provides a range of activities and policies, from the local level to the state and national levels. The Toolkit also provides resources, models to follow, and allies with whom you can join forces.

## Media/Awareness Campaign Resources

This quick [guide](#) from Advocacy & Communication Solutions will help you understand the process of planning and developing a robust public awareness campaign. Keep in mind that your plan must be tailored toward the specific needs of your organization, community, and budget. Your plan might require additional or fewer components.

SugarScience.org has created a [toolkit of graphics and multimedia materials](#) to help educate the public about the health impacts of consuming too much added sugar. All messages have been vetted for accuracy by a team of scientists and are supported by peer-reviewed scientific research.

The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative provides access to free ["5210 Every Day"](#) campaign materials to promote four practices, including zero sugary drinks, to improve overall health.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention hosts the [Community Health Media Center \(CHMC\)](#), a collection of free and low-cost, audience-tested advertising and support materials.

## **SSB Tax Resources**

[The Pros and Cons of Taxing Sweetened Beverages Based on Sugar Content](#) is a research report by the Urban Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy. This report analyses the potential benefits and costs of scaling SSB taxes to sugar content.

[Understanding the Case of for Taxing Sugar-Sweetened Beverages](#) is a policy brief from the National Coalition on Health Care, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of organizations representing more than 80 participating organizations, including medical societies, businesses, unions, health care providers, faith-based associations, pension and health funds, insurers, and groups representing consumers, patients, women, minorities and persons with disabilities.

[Taxing Sugar Drinks: A Tool for Obesity Prevention, Cost Savings, and Health Improvement](#) is a policy options brief prepared by the Public Health Law Center. This policy brief reviews the scientific evidence linking consumption of sugar drinks to obesity. It then evaluates the use of pricing policies as a tool to reduce consumption of these beverages and improve weight, while discussing potential drawbacks and likely industry opposition to these policies. Finally, this analysis summarizes some of the most recent national and state initiatives and considers future developments in the implementation of pricing policies to reduce the consumption of sugar drinks and improve weight in the United States.

The Kick the Can [Legislative Campaigns page](#) provides up to date information of legislative campaigns around the country at various levels of government on policies intended to reduce access to and consumption of SSBs.

## **Default Beverages with Kids' Meals Resources**

[Memo: How two cities are successfully enforcing kids' meal ordinances](#) is a memorandum from Center for the Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and Voices for Healthy Kids to provide information on how two cities are successfully

enforcing kids' meal ordinances at little cost, but great benefit, to the public as a model for other localities.

[Soda on the Menu](#) is a report from CSPI analyzing how chain restaurant children menu beverage offerings have changed over the past eight years, and offers suggestions for how restaurants can further improve their beverages for children.

### **Limit SSBs on Government Property Resources**

[Making Change: Healthier Vending for Municipalities](#) explores different options for municipalities looking to develop a healthy vending policy to improve the food environment for people working for, visiting, and being served by local government agencies. The guide provides model contract language to help nutrition advocates and municipalities improve the food environment while maintaining a reasonable cash flow.

[Financial Implications of Healthy Vending](#) is a fact sheet from CSPI providing information on sustained or improved revenue when switching to healthy vending.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network and partners, as part of the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, provide [model food and beverage vending machine standards](#). These guidelines provide recommendations for making vending machines on municipal, state, and federal government property healthier.

# End Notes

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