



Healthy Food in Health Care Program Best Practices
Healthy Beverage Program
Fairview Hospital

Demographics information:

Fairview Hospital, a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, is the provider of the healthcare and medical needs of the rural, southern Berkshire, tri-state community.

Fairview has placed a high priority on nutrition and sustainability in our food service initiatives, believing that good nutrition is a key factor in strong health. In 2007, Fairview Hospital was the first hospital in Massachusetts to sign the Healthy Food in Healthcare Pledge with Health Care Without Harm. It is the first hospital in the US to discontinue the sale of sugar sweetened beverages in its cafeteria and vending machines (2010) and it has undertaken numerous initiatives to act as an example, and a promoter, of a healthy and sustainable community including using products from local farmers and discontinuing the use of trans-fats in our food.

Problem:

A recent study by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy and the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research found that 24 percent of adults drink one or more non-diet sodas a day and these adults are 27 percent more likely to be overweight. The results for children ages 2 to 11 show that they imbibe at least one sugar-sweetened drink a day. One 12-ounce can of soft drink contains about eight teaspoons of added sugar, which equals approximately 130 calories.

In early 2010, a vote by the Massachusetts House of Representatives to ban the sale of soft drinks in schools due to its direct impact on obesity spurred Fairview Hospital to take action in the interest of public health.

Addressing the Problem:

Fairview's first step, in 2009, focused on addressing the pricing structure of sugar-sweetened beverages. The price of all soda in Fairview's vending and retail establishments increased from \$1.25 to \$1.50. This pricing shift slowed sales of soda. Although a sugar-sweetened beverage policy to eliminate soda was never part of the initial plan, these changes came about in the context of a national conversation on obesity and the role of sugar-sweetened beverages. The result, through the leadership of Fairview's CEO, Eugene Dellea, was a complete shift in the availability of these sugar-sweetened beverages throughout the facility.

Knysh was clear that, "this is not a ban on the personal consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, but a sales phase-out at our facility, consistent with our role as a health-promoting hospital." Once the sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) were removed from all areas, cafeteria, catering, vending and patient menus, there seemed to be no noticeable change in sales revenue. While Fairview eliminated all sugar-sweetened beverages in 2010, it still offers diet sodas, diet iced tea, unsweetened iced tea and bottled water (the only bottled water in the facility) via vending.

Implementation Process:

The stakeholder team included all the department directors and the CEO, Eugene Dellea. The Nutrition and Food Services Director, Roger Knysh, and his staff were accountable for the implementation. Department Directors were expected to communicate the change to their staffs.

Roll-Out:

- Introduced the idea of the elimination of SSBs at a Management Team meeting a year prior to rollout.
- Offered good education to staff of SSB throughout the process
- Upper management announced the removal of SSB at a Department Head meeting one week prior to elimination
- Memo was provided to staff to disperse throughout various departments, explaining the initiative.
- Phased out the product in vending and did not re-order.
- Push-back was received from a small number of staff. Additional education and communication about SSBs was provided. Support from CEO on the initiative assisted in conveying the importance of the initiative.

A word of advice to those who are looking forward to eliminating SSB at their facility is to budget accordingly. This includes the establishment of a general contract with your vendor for beverages – meaning that the contract should not specify a percentage of SSB's sold, so as to allow the facility to pick and choose which beverages it wishes to offer. As far as Fairview's contractual agreement, "it states we will purchase beverages – not which kind or how many of each, so we chose unsweetened." Importantly, although the policy change appears to have had little effect on revenue, Fairview's primary concern was making their community healthier, not about any potential revenue loss.

Benefits:

Fairview has received publicity about being the first hospital to carry out this initiative and the local community has responded positively. Efforts to become a healthier environment are ongoing and the hospital staff pays close attention to what's going on among other hospitals, schools and businesses to identify new opportunities and partnerships.

Challenges and Lessons Learned:

According to Knysh, the biggest challenge to implementing the new SSB policy was communication and education. "We didn't realize that a small group of people would see this more as a challenge to their personal choices, rather than as an opportunity to set the example and increase awareness as healthcare leaders."

Mr. Knysh advises interested healthcare providers to get frontline management on board first and plan for a place and time where staff can have their questions and concerns addressed before action is taken. "Making sure they have adequate time to get feedback from their staff is critical before implementation...with good planning you can send a clear and consistent message."

Next Steps:

Fairview's next steps are focusing on the issue of hunger and poor nutrition in our community.

Fairview began collaboration with the local homeless shelter providing leftover food that is picked up three mornings a week by the shelter and feeds 10-15 people a day with fresh, homemade foods that had previously been discarded. Fairview also runs an annual February American Heart Month Food Drive to support the local Food Pantry.

Fairview is also focusing on children. In 2011 Fairview initiated The Summer Lunch Project. Fairview Hospital successfully initiated a collaboration that provided the first free summer lunch program targeted to children under 12 years of age.

We are currently exploring the opportunity to expand the program to providing 100 lunches five days a week from the end of June through the end of August. We will continue to partner with Berkshire South, South Berkshire Women, Infants and Children to deliver lunches at Berkshire South. We hope to add a link to the summer reading program for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District.

Policy:

**Fairview Hospital Sugar Sweetened Beverage
Sales Elimination Policy**

More than half of Americans are overweight-including at least 1 in 5 children and nearly one third are obese. Each year, approximately \$45 billion is spent on treating the diseases associated with obesity.¹ Individual eating habits are largely influenced by accessibility, time constraints and costs in one's daily environment. As places of healing, hospitals should be the ones to set an example of a health promoting facility. One of the first steps to providing such an environment is to promote healthy beverages.

POLICY

As part of an effort to eliminate the availability and accessibility of sugar sweetened beverages (SSB's) in hospitals to ensure a healthy environment for patients, staff and visitors, Fairview Hospital will end the sale of SSBs in February 2010.

II. PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for purchasing activities to eliminate SSB's and/or carbonated beverages in the hospital environment.

III. GUIDELINES

A. Responsibilities

1. Purchasing Department

In an effort to eliminate SSB's, personnel involved in purchasing decisions shall adhere to the guidelines set forth in this policy when making purchasing decisions. The department will participate in establishing goals to eliminate SSB's in all four areas (patient menus, catering, vending and cafeteria).

2. Food Service Director

The Food Service Director will track SSB sales or purchasing data as appropriate to track trends and educate the Wellness Committee. Sending out memos is one way to make sure everyone is well informed.

3. Department Managers/End Users

The individuals in the various departments including central services, clinical staff, facilities and other departments must work with purchasing and the Food Service Director to implement this policy and to develop effective employee communication and to implement this policy.

B. Exceptions

SSB's will not be available on menus; however, they can be obtained in special circumstances or upon patient request. These situations may include: recommendation from physician, prescription and patient choice.

C. Personal Choice

Employees and visitors will continue to have personal choice of any beverages they chose to purchase

outside of the hospital and bring to work (consistent with any excising environmental health and safety regulations).

D. Definitions

An SSB is considered any beverage with any added caloric sweeteners (sugar, high fructose corn syrup).

E. Purchasing Guidelines

1. Establish an unsweetened beverage policy with vendors.

With few exceptions, hospitals should eliminate SSB's in the cafeteria, vending, catering and patient menus

2. Promote Tap Water.

Bottled water will not be promoted as an alternative to water fountains and/or water dispensers and cups should be more accessible and readily available.

3. Signage shall be clear and indicate availability of water.

Vendors should be contacted and provide information regarding Fairview Hospitals unsweetened beverage position.

4. Select those vendors who are willing to either alter or provide a contract that does not specify a certain percentage of SSB's that must be purchased or sold and provides alternatives to SSB's. Fairview Hospital will develop a preferred list of vendors based on those who are willing to meet these needs and alternative actions.

5. Identify SSB reduction goals through purchasing efforts.

An assessment will be conducted to evaluate the consumption patterns before and after the policy is implemented. This can provide other hospital institutions with an idea of what to expect when adopting and implanting the change.

Fairview Hospital adheres to this initiative to eliminate SSB's and to promote the health of employees, patients and visitors and to provide a model for other healthcare institutions.

Director of Nutrition and Food Services

President
