Don't Sugarcoat Our Future™

Tips for Effective Healthy Drinks Messaging

✓ Focus on the availability of healthy alternatives and the association between sugary drinks and chronic diet-related illnesses, such as diabetes and heart disease.

✓ Don't use "soda" as a replacement for "sugary drink." Most people know soda is unhealthy, but are less aware of the health risks posed by other sugary drinks like energy drinks, sports drinks, and fruit drinks with added sugar. List soda last.

✓ Don't focus on diet drinks as a healthy alternative. Many people view the ingredients found in diet sodas to be as concerning as the amount of sugar in non-diet drinks.

✓ Make the connection between sugary drink consumption and the marketing practices of the beverage industry as a whole, but don't single out individual companies as the source of the problem. Generally, people have positive associations with their favorite brands.

✓ If discussing a sugary drink tax, highlight the programs the sugary drink tax revenue will support if passed: diabetes education, clean drinking water in schools, walking trails and bike paths, universal pre-k or other programs to help residents, especially kids, build healthy habits.

Healthy Drinks Messages (*Use key messages consistently and repeatedly)

★ Consuming sugary drinks, such as fruit drinks with added sugar, sports drinks, and soda, poses a real health risk to kids.

• Sugary drinks are a major contributor to the increasing rates of diabetes and heart disease.
And with our country already spending $190 billion per year treating these preventable diseases, we need to address the problem.

• Every child deserves to grow up at a healthy weight, which means promoting healthy beverage options – like water and milk.

• Healthy drink options should be easily accessible and available in places where kids and families spend their time, clean drinking water should be available in public places, and healthy drinks should be priced at an equal or lower cost than less healthy options.

Language to Emphasize/Language to Avoid

Messages that resonate best are clear and simple. They use everyday language free of jargon and communicate shared values and emotion. Below you'll find a list of words/phrases Voices for Healthy Kids encourages you to use (left-hand column) when talking about healthy drinks. Language in the right-hand column includes terms and phrases not as easily understood or impactful when looking to engage your audience.

Use This Language	Instead of This Language
✓ Sugary drinks like sports drinks, fruit drinks with added sugar, energy drinks and soda; drinks with added sugar	✗ Sugar-sweetened beverages or SSBs
✓ Cities and states across the country want to support important programs like clean drinking water in schools, walking trails and bike paths, and universal pre-k. Sugary drink taxes create much-needed revenue for these initiatives.	✗ Sugary drink taxes help reduce consumption of unhealthy beverages.
✓ Healthy drink alternatives include water, milk, and 100% juice with no added sugars.	✗ Healthy drink alternatives include diet soda.
✓ Helping children grow up at a healthy weight	✗ Preventing childhood obesity
✓ Eating healthy and being physically active helps prevent diabetes and heart disease.	✗ Eating healthy and being physically active helps prevent childhood obesity.

Tips for Effective Messaging to Support Public Policy Change

1 Connect with supporters.

When communicating to gain support for policy, systems, and environmental changes that help kids grow up at a healthy weight, it is important to use language that will move people to take action. By framing your message in a way that paints a picture of how the current environment makes it difficult, if not impossible, to make healthy choices, you can create a sense of urgency and the need to take action. Make sure to clarify that the change and action you're calling for is about transforming environments to make it easy for people to eat healthy and be physically active and less about creating personal behavior change.

2 Use the right words.

While obesity is a chronic disease, most people still think of it as a personal problem with a personal solution. They believe if someone is obese or overweight, that person just needs to eat less and be more physically active. They don't immediately see the need for public policy solutions. However, when talking about people facing obesity-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease, most people agree that we need to work together to find a solution to the problem. Avoid using "obesity" and instead emphasize the health threats posed by heart disease and/or diabetes.

3 Emphasize choice.

People are most supportive of healthy changes if they don't fear their choices will be limited. When talking about adding healthy options, stress the array of overall choices offered to people, especially parents who we are here to support, so the focus is not on the removal of unhealthy options.

4 Use the right messenger.

Messages are only as strong as the person delivering them. Is the person delivering the message credible? Are they representative of the community most affected? Do they have personal experience related to the issue? Are they respected by the audience? The best messenger needs to be determined for each situation and location. For example, when messaging on health issues, the best messenger could be a doctor, a nurse, or a patient. Make informed decisions about the most culturally appropriate messenger on an issue.

5 Stress consumer education as ONE piece of the puzzle.

People believe education is the best way to encourage behavior change. But helping all children grow up at a healthy weight is a complex challenge and education is only one part of the solution. Reinforce consumer education as key to awareness building about the problem and solutions, but emphasize other initiatives that drive system-wide policy change. For example, with tobacco use, warning labels did a great deal to educate consumers but the change in norms and dramatic drops in smoking rates happened when environmental changes happened like prohibiting the sale to minors and making workplaces smoke-free.

6 Alleviate skepticism and build trust.

People are very skeptical of government and framing our solutions only from that lens can prevent us from getting our message through to key audiences. Introduce policy, systems, and environmental change efforts to the public with words like "services," "resources," "partnerships," as people are more inclined to embrace this terminology instead of "regulations," "mandates," "bans," "funding," and "government."