



## Policy Recommendations to Encourage Drinking Water in Place of Sugary Beverages for the 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health

### Summary of Recommendations

**Why target sugary drinks?** Across all ages, sugary drinks are the largest single source of added sugars in the American diet; extensive research shows the health risks of added sugars and particularly those in liquid form. Sugary drinks are also among the top sources of calories in the American diet; these calories have little or no nutrition. Yet, nearly two-thirds of US adults consume sugary drinks at least once a day. Sugary drink consumption can exacerbate health disparities; these beverages also have a large environmental footprint.

**Why encourage water?** Water, and particularly tap water, is the healthiest, no calorie, equitable and environment-friendly way to quench thirst. Healthy hydration also supports physical activity. These recommendations aim to enable people to make water, especially tap water, a beverage of choice in place of sugary drinks.

**Problem:** Sugary drink consumption is too high and consumers' beverage behaviors are impaired by lack of knowledge about healthy choices. The MyPlate graphic is the primary representation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans for the American public, yet it does not encourage water as a beverage of choice for health. We need to use all available tools to make water "first for thirst," including MyPlate.

**Pillars:** *Integrate nutrition and health; Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices*

**Recommendation:** Request USDA and HHS to take the necessary steps to add a symbol for water to the MyPlate graphic.

**Problem:** Federal government beverage procurement/availability practices (purchase, sales, and service) do not align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and other relevant policies.

**Pillars:** *Integrate nutrition and health; Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices*

**Recommendation:** Develop/strengthen and implement federal procurement policy to restrict or eliminate sugary drinks on federal properties and in federally funded programs.

- See Nutrition Policy Institute (NPI) policy recommendations, issue: [Sugary beverages on federal properties and in federally funded programs](#)

**Problem:** Americans' sugary drink consumption is too high and sugary drinks are loaded with calories and added sugars that deliver few or no nutritional benefits but increase the risk of myriad diet-related chronic diseases. The U.S. doesn't take full advantage of SNAP-Ed programs in order to reduce this unnecessary risk to Americans' health and to enable them to drink plain water instead.

**Pillars:** *Integrate nutrition and health; Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices*

**Recommendation:** USDA should add a requirement that all states' SNAP-Ed programs include a healthy beverage component consisting both of education and of policy, systems and environmental change (PSE) strategies, all aimed both at reducing sugary drink intake and at enabling consumption of water (and preferably tap water).

- See NPI policy recommendations, issue: [Use SNAP-Ed to Address Overconsumption of Sugary Drinks](#)

**Problem:** Consumers' beverage behaviors are impaired by lack of knowledge about healthy choices and tap water may be unsafe or perceived as unsafe. A full array of interventions is needed to reduce this unnecessary risk to Americans' health and to enable them to drink plain water instead.

**Pillars:** *Integrate nutrition and health; Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices*

**Recommendation:** USDA, in collaboration with other appropriate stakeholders, should develop and disseminate a WIC nutrition education component on drinking water safety and on healthy hydration habits.

- See NPI policy recommendations, issue: [Healthy beverages for WIC participants](#)

**Problem:** There is too much lead in some school and childcare tap water.

**Pillars:** *Improve food access and affordability; Enhance nutrition and food security research*

**Recommendations:**

1. EPA, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, Protection Branch: EPA, with inter-agency assistance, should maximize use of tap water lead testing “3Ts” guidance and electronic reporting via EPA’s new “eTrackers.” Further, direct and enable EPA to obtain analyses of [Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation \(WIIN\) Act of 2016](#) lead testing program strategies and results.
2. EPA: In upcoming Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI), EPA should extend Lead and Copper Rule Revision tap water lead testing requirements from 2 taps per facility to all taps used for drinking and cooking water.<sup>1</sup>
3. School Nutrition Programs (NSLP, SBP, SFSP, CACFP Afterschool Snack/Supper): Request that USDA expand the on-site Administrative Review by adding specific checkpoints to ensure that there is effective oversight of drinking water safety in school nutrition programs.
4. Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): Request that USDA add specific checkpoints to CACFP monitoring site visit instruction to ensure that there is effective oversight of drinking water safety.
5. Convene relevant agencies, researchers and advocacy groups to develop consensus on an action level for lead in childcare and school drinking water and best practices for testing and remediation.
6. See NPI policy recommendations, issue: [Lead in school and childcare tap water](#)

**Problem:** Too many children are under-hydrated and lack good (“effective”) access to drinking water.

**Pillars:** *Improve food access and affordability; Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices; Supports physical activity for all*

**Recommendation:** Ensure that every public K-12 school in the U.S. has at least one water bottle filling station, in a high-traffic area accessible throughout the day, with filtration if needed.

**Additional recommendations:**

1. School Nutrition Programs: Expand on-site Administrative Review to ensure that there is effective implementation of drinking water access.
2. Child and Adult Care Food Program: Extend CACFP monitoring site visit instruction to ensure that there is effective implementation of CACFP’s excellent requirements for drinking water access.
3. See NPI policy recommendations, issue: [Children’s access to drinking water in schools and childcare](#)

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<sup>1</sup> EPA’s Lead and Copper Rule Revision of 2021 requires utilities to sample tap water for lead in those childcare facilities served by the water system – but only every 5 years, and at only 2 outlets per facility. By 10/16/2024, EPA hopes to have finalized Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI), its next step in lead reduction, intended to strengthen regulatory frameworks. (US Environmental Protection Agency. (2021). National primary drinking water regulations: Lead and copper rule revisions. Fed. Regist., 84(219)).