

Intervention

The Horizon Foundation, a health-focused foundation located in Howard County (HC) Maryland, along with several community partners launched a multi-year campaign to reduce sugary drink consumption among all county residents in December 2012ⁱ. Howard County Unsweetened is a community campaign based on an adapted social ecological model (Fig 1). It includes several components:

Interpersonal Level – These campaign activities are designed to facilitate individual behavior change through the influence of a person’s social network (e.g., family, friends, classmates, etc.) and changes to social norms. Highlighted interventions include:

- **Better Beverage Finder**ⁱⁱ: This online tool, powered by national nutrition standards compiled by the Rudd Center, aims to help residents search for more than 300 beverage options that are both lower in sugar and calories. It provides both nutrition content of chosen beverages and where to purchase them in the county.
- **HC Unsweetened Street Teams**: The campaign hired professional marketers in 2013 and 2014 to set up and staff booths at neighborhood summer and fall events (e.g., 4th of July fireworks), swimming pools, sporting events, etc. with the goal of educating residents about the Better Beverage Finder and collecting contact information from supporters.
- **HC Unsweetened Social Media**: The campaign regularly posts information on several social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest.

Organizational Level – These campaign activities are designed to facilitate individual behavior change through changes to organizational systems and policies. Highlighted interventions include:

- **Hopkins Medicine Healthy Beverage Initiativeⁱⁱⁱ**: In 2014, Howard County General Hospital, a member of Hopkins Medicine, launched an initiative to make healthier drinks more widely available and affordable on the hospital campus. Only healthier drinks are offered at Johns Hopkins-sponsored meetings and events. Healthier drinks cost less per ounce than sugary drinks. And sugary drinks that are available are sold in containers of 12 ounces or less.
- **Healthy Play Campaign^{iv}**: In 2015, a prominent local soccer league launched a program to educate young players about proper nutrition and fitness and is working to develop, source, and test a healthy concession menu.
- **AAP Pediatric Obesity Collaborative**: The American Academy of Pediatrics, Maryland Chapter launched a nine month, quality improvement, learning collaborative in 2015 to improve providers' practice behaviors related to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of childhood obesity and related diseases. 13 practices and 40 providers participated and met 8 of 9 quality measure goals by the end of the collaborative. Additional resources^v were developed to help support practice transformation and educate patients about sugary drink consumption.
- **Better Choices Coalition**: In 2014, the campaign formed the Better Choices Coalition to work with community organizations, faith groups, and businesses to improve the food environment in those settings. Almost 50 local community

organizations have agreed to improve the food and drink they offer at meetings, improve vending machine selections, and educate their members, clients, and visitors about the dangers of sugary drink consumption. A comprehensive toolkit^{vi} offered to members includes social media posts, newsletter articles, posters, handouts, activities, and more.

- **MDAC SSB Best Practices Initiative:** The Maryland Dental Action Coalition along with state and local dentist and dental hygienist groups, has been developing best practice guidelines related to counseling about sugary drink consumption. Once developed, they will be vetted with state professional groups and adopted as best practices for oral health practices and professionals.
- **Eat, Play, Grow in Head Start^{vii}:** In 2015, the local Head Start programs adopted a new curriculum based on a program created by the National Institute of Health and Children’s Museum of Manhattan. This curriculum teaches young children about healthy nutrition and physical activity and involves parents in classroom learning and take-home activities.
- **Healthy Childcare Program:** A local non-profit, Healthy Howard, launched this program in 2013 to help childcare facilities provide healthier drinks to children in their care, better support mothers who are breastfeeding, and reduce non-educational screen time. More than 70 childcare facilities were certified as Healthy Childcare Facilities over a two year period.

Community Level – These campaign activities are designed to facilitate individual behavior change through leveraging community resources and participation.

Highlighted interventions include:

- **Joint Data Collection and Priority Setting:** In 2012, four major community health institutions joined forces to field a biennial community health survey to serve as a joint strategic planning tool. As a result, these organizations have similar strategic planning goals including helping to keep children and adults at a healthy weight.
- **Your Voice, Your Choice Documentary Contest:** In 2014, the Horizon Foundation held a youth documentary contest related to sugary drinks and their impact in the community. Teams of youth submitted ten submissions. The winning video was revealed and aired during a “red-carpet” community celebration.
- **Sugar Free Kids Maryland Coalition^{viii}:** This 150+ member coalition formed to build on the work of Howard County Unsweetened and advance sugary drink policy statewide.
- **Community Partnerships:** The Horizon Foundation established partnerships with several key community groups (e.g., PATH-Faith Group, Howard County Public School System, African-American Community Roundtable, and the Local Health Improvement Coalition) to serve as key hubs for improving the food and physical activity environment in the county.
- **HoCo Unsweetened Media Campaign:** Since 2012, the campaign has aired 30-second spots^{ix} on local TV stations, run digital ads on a variety of internet sites, sent direct mail to county households, and utilized earned media strategies to educate the public about campaign activities.

- **Joint Chamber of Commerce Study on Obesity^x** – Working with the local chamber of commerce, the Horizon Foundation commissioned a study to examine the fiscal impact of obesity on county businesses.

Policy Level – These campaign activities are designed to facilitate individual behavior change through changes to laws, policies, and budgets. Highlighted interventions include:

- **School Policy Wellness Policy Update^{xi}** – Since 2012, the Foundation and its community partners have been working together with the school system to improve the school food and nutrition environment and to update the school wellness policy to be more reflective of best practices. Using its WellSAT^{xii} policy scoring system, the Rudd Center determined that the new wellness policy ranked in the top third^{xiii} of the nation after modifications.
- **Maryland Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in Childcare Act:** In 2014, Sugar Free Kids Maryland successfully advocated for the passage of this state law which requires facilities to provide healthier drinks to children in their care, better support mothers who are breastfeeding, and reduce non-educational screen time. Many of these standards are based on the successful “Healthy Child Care” program.
- **Healthy Food and Beverage Options on County Property:** Since 2012, the Foundation and its community partners have been working to make healthier food and drinks more widely available, accessible, and noticeable on county property and county programs. There have been four distinct policy campaigns^{xiv,xv,xvi,xvii} related to this process. The most recent policy campaign in

the summer of 2015 resulted in a county law being passed. As a result, 75% of the food and drinks offered in county-operated vending machines must meet national nutrition standards and be placed in the highest selling positions in the machine.

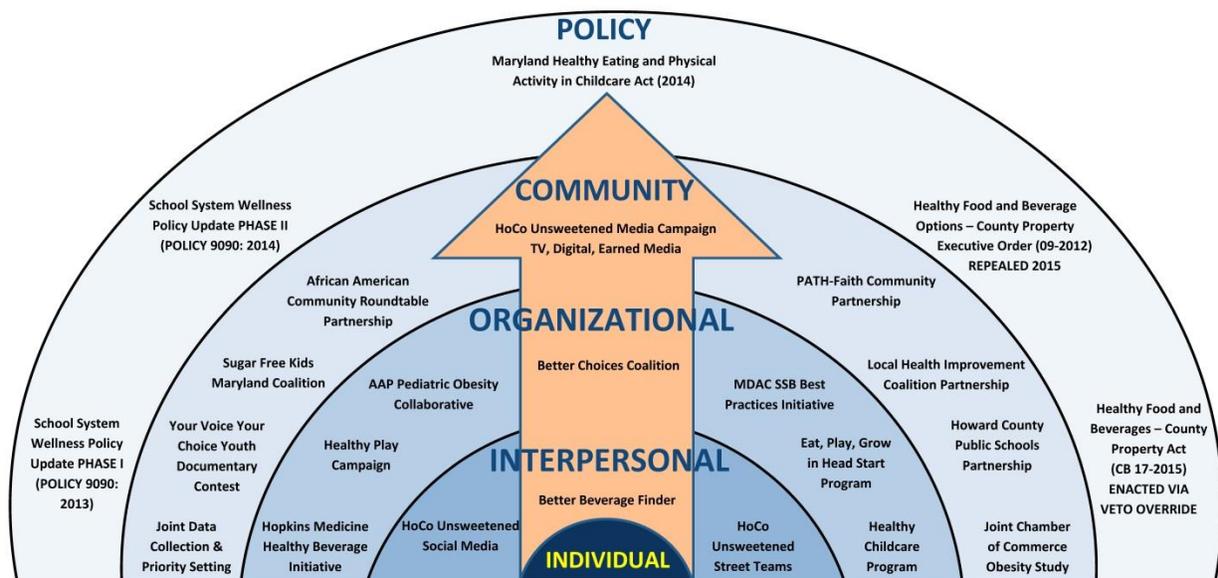


Figure 1: Howard County Unsweetened Model

ⁱ Lavoie L. Howard County groups launch campaign against sugar. *Baltimore Sun*, December 11, 2012. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/ellcott-city/ph-howard-county-groups-launch-campaign-against-sugar-20121211-story.html> Accessed February 27, 2016.

ⁱⁱ The Better Beverage Finder. Howard County Unsweetened Micro Web site. www.betterbeveragefinder.org Published November 6, 2012. Updated February 6, 2016. Accessed February 27, 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Healthy Beverages. Johns Hopkins Medicine Web site. http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/human_resources/benefits/healthy_at_hopkins/healthy_beverages/ Published September 19, 2014. Updated September 4, 2015. Accessed February 27, 2016.

^{iv} Ellicott City Soccer Club Helps Howard County Kids Learn Healthy Habits. Horizon Foundation Facebook Web site. <https://www.facebook.com/TheHorizonFoundation/videos/1198654576828728/> Published February 10, 2016. Accessed February 27, 2016.

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- ^v Better Choices Coalition Posters and Handouts. Better Choices Coalition Web site. <http://betterchoicescoalition.org/toolkit/resources/poster-handouts/> Published November 24, 2015. Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{vi} Better Choices Coalition Tool Kit. Better Choices Coalition Web site. <http://betterchoicescoalition.org/toolkit/resources/> Published November 22, 2015. Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{vii} Cech LB. Head Start program aims to improve families' eating habits through their youngest members. *Howard Magazine*, January 6, 2016. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/howard-magazine/ph-mg-ho-eat-play-grow-head-start-20160106-story.html> Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{viii} Sugar Free Kids Coalition. Sugar Free Kids Maryland Web site. <http://www.sugarfreekidsmd.org> Published October 7, 2014. Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{ix} Howard County Unsweetened. Howard County Unsweetened Campaign Web site. <http://www.hocounsweetened.org> Published December 12, 2102. Accessed February 27, 2016
- ^x Report Details Economic Impacts of Obesity in Howard County. The Horizon Foundation Web site. <http://www.thehorizonfoundation.org/report-details-economic-impacts-of-obesity-in-howard-county/> Published February 6, 2014. Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{xi} Howard County Public School System Policy 9090. The Howard County Public School System Web site. <http://www.hcpss.org/f/board/policies/9090.pdf> Published September 17, 2014. Updated October 12, 2015. Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{xii} WellSAT 2.0: Wellness School Assessment Tool. The Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity Micro Web site. <http://www.wellsat.org/> Published November 7, 2014. Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{xiii} Howard County School Wellness Policy Gets Top National Ranking. The Horizon Foundation Web site. <http://www.thehorizonfoundation.org/howard-county-school-wellness-policy-gets-top-national-ranking/> Published July 10, 2014. Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{xiv} Lavoie L, Rector K. Howard County bans distribution of sugary drinks on county property. *Washington Post*. December 12, 2012. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/howard-county-bans-distribution-of-sugary-drinks-on-county-property/2012/12/12/db9e2d0e-4463-11e2-8e70-e1993528222d_story.html Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{xv} Yeager A. Kittleman says he will repeal sugary drinks ban immediately upon taking office. *Howard County Times*. November 15, 2014. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/ellicott-city/ph-sugary-drinks-ban-repeal-story.html> Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{xvi} Yeager A. Howard debates merits of nutritional guidelines for county concessions. *Howard County Times*. May 19, 2015. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/ellicott-city/ph-ho-cf-nutritional-standards-hearing-story.html> Accessed February 27, 2016.
- ^{xvii} Yeager A. Howard Council overturns nutritional standards veto. *Howard County Times*. July 31, 2015. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/ellicott->

city/ph-ho-cf-nutritional-standards-veto-overturned-story.html Accessed February 27, 2016.