



HOWARD COUNTY.
Unsweetened.
See <http://www.hocounsweetened.org>

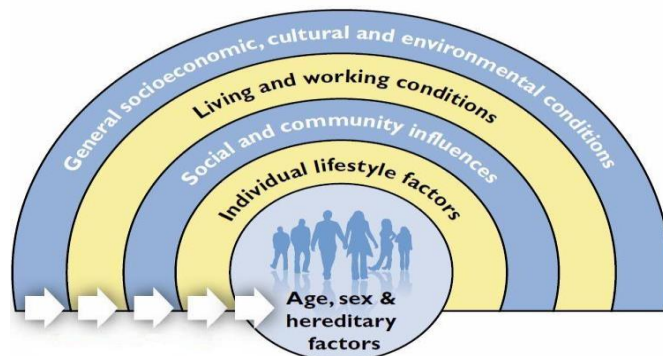
Howard Countians suffer higher rates of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes than should be expected given our residents' wealth and high levels of education. Experts now predict that one of three children will be diagnosed with diabetes in their lifetimes. Worse yet, the number of children being diagnosed with diabetes, obesity and other diseases has dramatically grown over the past two decades. If trends continue, this generation of Howard County children may be the first ever to lead shorter, sicker lives than their parents. Sugary drink consumption is the single greatest contributor to these epidemics. They are the single greatest source of added sugar and excess calories in a child's diet.

After consulting national experts, the Horizon Foundation and other community partners launched "Howard County Unsweetened" in December of 2012. The campaign is:

- **Evidence and Outcome-Based** – The campaign has partnered with Yale University's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity to evaluate the campaign and provide technical assistance to staff and grantees. It is also collecting the necessary data to gauge success and has set both two-year and five-year outcome objectives. According to the Rudd Center, "Howard County. Unsweetened." will be the most evaluated sugary drink campaign in the country.
- **Guided by a National Advisory Committee** – The campaign is guided by a 15 member team of national obesity prevention experts who regularly review data collected and offer suggestions to improve the campaign.
- **Family Centered** – Children who maintain a healthy weight through high school are much more likely to stay at a healthy weight for a lifetime. Parents (particularly moms) are important campaign targets, because they model healthy behavior for their children and make food and drink purchases for their families. Young people are also key to changing family and community norms. Young people will provide campaign leadership and help focus community attention on the current lack of healthy choices available.
- **Focused on Healthy Drink Choices** – In focus groups, Howard County parents stressed the need to focus on one aspect of nutrition at a time. Given that sugary drinks (i.e., soda, juices with added sugar, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavored teas, and flavored waters) are the largest single source of added sugar in a child's diet and contribute significantly to weight gain, the campaign focuses families on the many healthier drink choices that exist. By the time Howard County children reach the 6th grade, nearly 60% of them are having at least one sugary drink each day (Howard County 6th Grade Survey). On average, these 6th graders report having 310 calories a day from sugary drinks alone (that's 4 times their daily limit for sugar and about 20% of their daily recommended calories).
- **Creating a Culture of Health** – Companies that market and promote unhealthy food and drink choices easily outspend health advocates. Experience shows that policy change is the only effective way to improve community health and change norms. For example, our state's low smoking rate is partially due to progressive tobacco use prevention policies established. With policy change, the places where children and their families learn, work, eat, play, and pray can be transformed into organizations that support healthy drink choices and improve the health and wellness of both the county and the state.
- **Partner/Collaboration Driven** – The campaign is based on the Dahlgren-Whitehead Health Determinants Model. Working with a strong coalition, the community is working to improve the health and wellness of the institutions and systems that drive community health.

Partnering With:

Howard County Public Schools
Howard County Government
Healthy Child Care Program
After-School Programs
Chamber of Commerce/Employers
Health Care Providers
Faith and Civic Groups
Youth Groups



EXAMPLES OF CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES:

- **County-Wide Education** –The campaign has produced, aired, and distributed several TV ads, digital advertising, etc., and has educated children and their families about the Better Beverage Finder. This online tool aims to help moms and dads search for more than 300 beverage options that are both low in sugar and great for families and kids.
- **Howard County Public School System** – While the campaign’s public message is focused on sugary drinks, the campaign has also worked to improve policies related to healthy eating and active lifestyles. In 2014, the Board of Education approved an update to the district’s wellness policy which phases in changes to the food environment and adds programs to increase students’ daily physical activity. For example, healthy food and drink choices are now the default in all student accessible vending machines, every school offers a healthy breakfast to all children, and 30-minute minimum recess times have been set for all elementary school students. National experts have ranked the school wellness policy as one of the top third in the nation.
- **Howard County Government** – In July 2015, the county council passed a law making healthier food and drinks more widely available and noticeable on government property and in programs that serve children. By adopting changes to the food environment, the County is improving employee health and may reduce county government health care costs over time.
- **Childcare Programs** –Via Healthy Howard, the campaign provided child care centers and home day-cares assistance to promote breastfeeding, serve healthier drinks to their children, and increase physical activity. After a successful two year pilot involving over 70 sites, the campaign worked with state partners to pass a 2014 state law making all childcare facilities healthier places for our children.
- **Health Care Providers** – The campaign is ensuring that providers will continue to offer the highest quality care possible by engaging local pediatricians, pediatric nurse practitioners, dentists, dental hygienists, and their professional organizations in intensive learning collaboratives and continuing education programs related to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diabetes, obesity, and sugar-caused tooth decay.
- **Employers** – The Howard County Chamber of Commerce and the Horizon Foundation jointly sponsored a study to assess the economic consequences of obesity in terms of employer health care cost, employee productivity, and employee absenteeism. Obesity costs Howard County employers over \$169 million a year in health care costs and lost productivity. This loss is equivalent to about 2500 jobs. We will continue to educate employers about how well designed wellness programs, policies, and health benefits can improve the bottom line and help make employees healthier and more productive.
- **Community Groups** – Via PATH, the African American Community Roundtable, and other partners, the Coalition is reaching out to churches, synagogues, mosques, and community groups to help make healthier food and drinks more available, accessible, noticeable, and affordable.
- **Youth Groups** – Howard County youth participated in the Your Voice; Your Choice Documentary Project which led to the first ever documentary film festival regarding sugary drinks. More plans are in the works for youth to lead aspects of the campaign moving forward.

IT’S WORKING!!!

Since December 2011, the campaign has been buying aggregate sales data – the same kind of data purchased by Big Soda. It shows that soda sales are dropping 2-3 times faster in Howard County than in the rest of the nation. Greater consumption drops have been seen in other sugary drink categories. We are making progress but still have more work to do. Daily sugary drink consumption has been shown to be deadly and costly to society.

Help make healthier food and drinks more available in our community. Join our growing coalition at <http://www.hocounsweetened.org> For more information, contact Glenn Schneider at the Horizon Foundation at 443-766-1217 or gshneider@thehorizonfoundation.org