

Bronx Healthy Beverage Zone: A Borough-Wide Movement



The Institute for Family Health

Bronx Health REACH and its partners Union Community Health Center (UCHC) and the New York Community (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Bronx Neighborhood Health Action Center (BxNHAC) have been co-leading a borough-wide initiative, known as the Healthy Beverage Zone (HBZ), that aims to make water and other healthy beverages more accessible.

A Borough-Wide Movement

Because so many New Yorkers spend the majority of their day at work, the workplace is an ideal place to ensure healthy options are available. Organizations agree to become HBZ CORE partners because the good health of their employees is good for business. There are six requirements for a worksite to be recognized as an HBZ CORE partner: 1) the organization's leadership must be educated, involved, and invested in promoting healthy beverages; 2) a site HBZ coordinator or liaison must be designated; 3) the worksite must complete the HBZ workplace contract and observational tool; 4) employees must complete a survey; 5) employees must be informed and engaged about why beverage choices matter; and 6) organizations must adopt a healthy meeting and vending policy to eliminate sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs).

Organizations are recognized by levels depending on the number of additional activities they complete. Example activities include improving access to water by installing fountains; posting signage to increase awareness of the negative health effects of SSBs; promoting water consumption; educating organizational affiliates about the health risks of SSBs; and engaging staff to serve as role models by

pledging to drink water and other healthy beverages instead of SSBs in public-accessible areas.



A child fills her cup with fruit-infused water at Word of Life International

Partnering to Promote Health

Since 2009, the Bronx has ranked 62nd of the 62 counties in New York State for poor health outcomes. Contributing to poor health is the Bronx's rate of SSB consumption, which is among the highest of New York City boroughs. SSB consumption is associated with overweight/obesity, dental cavities, and insulin resistance. Dr. Vanessa Salcedo, a pediatrician at UCHC, became increasingly alarmed by the number of her patients who had these conditions. She wanted to make a difference and started by getting the staff to be role models in promoting healthy behaviors and making UCHC "SSB-free."

Building on this model, UCHC partnered with Bronx Health REACH, BxNHAC, and #Not62—The Campaign for A Healthy Bronx, to form HBZ. Before its launch in April 2017, HBZ gained was

chosen as a finalist of Aetna's Healthiest Cities and County Challenge. The national attention increased momentum to reduce the borough's health inequities.

The HBZ team educates staff of Bronx worksites and helps them develop wellness policies and practices that promote and increase access to healthy beverages. In addition, the HBZ team provides outreach and technical assistance to build organizational capacity. As a result, organizational leaders and staff are helping to: 1) increase awareness of the harmful effects of SSBs; and 2) make healthy beverages readily available. For example, Word of Life International has incorporated HBZ activities and issued a call for healthy lifestyles in Sunday services. Reverend John Udo-Okon reinforces these messages by providing fruit-infused water using a dispenser provided by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC). This emphasis on healthy beverage choices and the nutrition education provided to congregants is benefitting children as well, who now use water bottles and make and drink fruit-infused water.

The Bronx and Beyond

HBZ is becoming a well-known brand and movement throughout the Bronx. Bronx Health REACH and HBZ participated in a #SSBFree Tweet chat co-hosted by UCHC and National Hispanic Medical Association in June 2018. HBZ has also garnered publicity and attention from several Bronx elected officials, several of whom were featured in a 1-year anniversary video for HBZ. Efforts are spreading beyond worksites and into schools. Bronx Health REACH and the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute created a counter marketing campaign now in place at several Bronx schools. The future looks bright as HBZ continues to inspire people to adopt healthier lifestyles.



Congregants at Church of God of Prophecy learning about healthy beverages



to learn more

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**Creating Healthy Schools
and Communities**

The places where we live, learn, work, and play all contribute to our ability to become and stay healthy. Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2015-2020) New York State Department of Health-funded initiative, is helping build stronger, healthier communities.