

Alliance for a Healthier Generation / Soft Drink Industry Guidelines: An Opportunity for Improving Students' Access to Healthy Beverages in Schools

In May 2006, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation (a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation) announced an industry agreement with Cadbury Schweppes, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and the American Beverage Association to establish new guidelines that will voluntarily remove high calorie soft drinks from all schools and limit beverage portion sizes and calories available to children during the school day. Under these guidelines, only lower calorie or nutritious beverages will be sold to schools by the participating soft drink companies.

With the removal of non-diet soft drinks from schools, there may be an increased opportunity for offering nutritious beverages including milk and 100% fruit juices in schools through vending and other school venues. The guidelines are a voluntary set of standards that the soft drink industry has agreed to implement in their school marketing programs. Keep in mind that the limitations on serving sizes of milk and 100% fruit juice in the soft drink industry guidelines are not binding on any school or district.

Points of Clarification

- The soft drink industry guidelines were not developed and have not been endorsed by any official government entity, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Instead, the guidelines reflect a voluntary agreement between the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and the soft drink companies.
- These soft drink industry guidelines direct beverage company practices not school districts. The guidelines are not binding on any school or district. They will primarily affect vending and a la carte sales, not the main school meal line.
- According to the federal wellness policy legislation*, schools must set individual goals for nutrition standards for all foods available on each school campus. School districts must adhere to any binding state legislation/regulations in doing so, but otherwise they have the sole authority to determine which standards they will apply in their district.
- The same law that created the wellness policy requirement also reaffirmed the longstanding mandate to offer milk with all school meals, and specifically called on schools to offer "a variety of fat levels," as well as providing that schools can always offer milk anytime anywhere on school property and at school events. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines encourage low-fat and non-fat dairy products but do not exclude the consumption of other fat varieties of dairy products.

If you are interested in offering milk through vending or in other school venues, contact your local dairy council. To find your local dairy council, go to http://www.nutritionexplorations.org/utility/findDC_a-l.asp.

* The Federal Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 mandates that any school district participating in a federal school meal program adopt a policy on student wellness. This law says that school districts must set goals for nutrition education, physical activity, all foods sold on campus and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness. Additionally, districts are required to involve a broad group of individuals in policy development and to have a plan for measuring policy implementation.