



Fairview Hospital SSB Elimination Case Study

Fairview Hospital, a 25 bed Critical Access hospital in Great Barrington, MA is a national leader in health promotion through its adoption of comprehensive healthy food in healthcare policies and practices. In spring 2010, Fairview Hospital gained international recognition by adopting and implementing a policy to eliminate the sale of sugar sweetened beverages (SSB's). This step was consistent with the many other steps it has taken to provide ecologically healthy alternatives.

In December 2009, the price of sodas increased from \$1.25 to \$1.50, which affected all carbonated beverages and SSB's in the cafeteria and vending. "We were originally just trying to align the prices with the standard market price," Roger Knysh, Director of Nutrition and Food Services stated. Although a SSB policy to eliminate soda sales was never part of the initial plan, these changes came about in the context of a national conversation on obesity and the role of SSB's. The result, through the leadership of Fairview's CEO Eugene Dellea, was a complete change in the availability of these sugary beverages throughout the facility.

Knysh was clear that, "this is not a ban on the personal consumption of SSB, but a sales phase-out at our facility consistent with our role as a health promoting hospital." Once the sodas were removed from all areas—cafeteria, catering, vending and patient menus, there seemed to be no noticeable change in sales revenue. While Fairview eliminated all SSB's in 2010, they do still offer diet sodas, diet iced tea, unsweetened iced tea, and bottled water (the only bottled water in the facility) via vending.

These transformations prompted a response from the nurses and physicians that was both positive and negative. "There was a concern at first that the intention was an outright ban on SSB consumption, but after sending a memo to clarify the situation, everyone seemed more at ease," Knysh said. Many felt that it was ideal for a hospital to provide such an environment and were very understanding. The facility isn't opting to regulate what their employee's drink, but rather to set a tone about the relationship between soda consumption, obesity and health, and to remove the hospital's contribution to this national epidemic.

Knysh said he learned a lot about the need for good education to the staff throughout the process. Memos explaining the rationale, to all staff, are a good way to avoid the "active grapevine in the facility". Moreover, "it was essential that our CEO was on board and encouraging this effort". Another word of advice to those who are looking forward to doing this is to budget accordingly. This includes the establishment of a general contract with your vendor for beverages—meaning the contract should not specify a percentage of SSB's sold so as to allow a facility to pick and choose what beverages it wishes to serve. As far as Fairview's contractual agreement, "It states we will purchase beverages—not which kind or how many of each, so we chose unsweetened." Importantly, although the policy change appears to have had

no effect on revenue, Fairview's primary concern was on making their community healthier, not about any potential revenue loss.

Fairview's policy applies to all SSB sales including catering, cafeteria, vending and in patient foodservice. In 2006, Fairview moved from traditional patient tray service to room service where the patients are able to choose what and when they want to order. This helps save on costs on duplicate trays. Patients are not automatically sent a tray; rather the process is reviewed with each patient prior to them choosing their first meal. Satisfaction surveys indicate patients choose less food and actually eat their meals. "Sodas have never been offered on patient menus," Knysh stated. "But they are available upon request for special situations." These situations include recommendation from physician, prescription and patient choice. Patient menu beverage offerings include an assortment of local Jersey milk, spring water, 100% juices, unsweetened iced tea, and shakes and smoothies.

Another shift was towards a "healthier" catering menu. "Our process for catering requires a requisition form, and administrative approval. In the past, we would provide whatever was requested, which often included chocolate chip cookies and 2 liter bottles of soda. "We decided if the hospital was paying, we would choose healthier items and take out sodas and offer more water and iced tea and fresh fruit instead of cookies," Knysh said. "There has not been any opposition."

As far as the next steps after eliminating SSB, Fairview is interested in reducing the portion sizes of juices in their cafeteria, which is an ongoing process. They reduced the size of a standard 16 oz. juice to 10 oz, but would like to further reduce to 4 oz. This would potentially "educate customers on appropriate portion size of fruit juice". Knysh brought up the idea of what parents used to give children when SSB's were not readily available, or excessively consumed, and remarked: "We need to get back to basics."