



# PART 1

## GET STARTED

A TOOTHKIT TO  
IMPROVED HEALTH



JUST ADD WATER

# UNDERSTAND

## THE BENEFITS OF WATER

Schools play a vital role in the health of children. Kids spend over six hours a day at school. Access to safe, free drinking water gives them a healthy alternative to sugary drinks such as juice, flavored milks, sports drinks and sodas.<sup>1</sup>

Drinking water, especially if fluoridated, can help prevent cavities.

When kids are sufficiently hydrated, they are better able to learn due to improved cognitive function.

In Colorado, 74.9 percent of residents served by public water systems have access to fluoridated water. While fluoridated tap water is ideal because of its cavity-preventing properties, any

kind of water—including bottled waters (which often don't have fluoride)—will help rinse teeth of bacteria.<sup>2</sup>

### Here's a guide for about how much water kids should drink every day:

1-3 year olds  
4 cups



4-8 year olds  
5 cups



9-13 year olds  
8 cups



14-18 year olds  
10 cups



<sup>1</sup> Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Increasing Access to Drinking Water in Schools*. Atlanta, GA: US Dept. of Health and Human Services; 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Oral Health Unit.

# BUILD

## PARTNERSHIPS

Leading change at a local level can feel overwhelming when you're alone. It's important to first find other like-minded people who are ready to stand up for health. Fortunately, drinking more water has gained traction. For example, parents and educators interested in promoting healthier options to sugary beverages have joined forces in schools. These positive changes are great, but communities across Colorado must also come together. Engaging many partners is key to greater oral health and sustainable change.

### Suggestions for reaching out to your community:

- Engage your peers to take action at meetings already planned by your school or organization.
- Talk to your friends and neighbors.
- Talk to the parents of your children's friends and their coaches or the parks and recreation department.

Tell potential partners your ideas and concerns; solicit their suggestions and be open to their opinions. Don't get discouraged if you can't enlist everyone to join the cause; even one impassioned partner is enough to get the ball rolling.

### Potential partners include:

- Child care provider(s).
- School principals, secretaries and nurses.
- Student leaders.
- Parent Teacher Community Organizations (PTCO) participants.
- Family liaisons.
- Coaches.
- Community outreach staff.
- Facility managers.
- Office managers.

# FORM

## A WELLNESS COMMITTEE

You might also consider forming a Wellness Committee that brings parents, teachers, administrators and staff together. We recommend speaking with your school or building administration to see what options already exist and what form the committee needs to take in order to create change. Plan to develop solutions to benefit both the oral and overall health of your community.

Once you have a small group of people who believe in your cause, you can start to approach others in your school, church or other organizations about forming a Wellness Committee. If you have a good relationship with a favorite teacher, administrative staff or anyone else within the school or organization, approach that person. If you are working within a school, it is a good idea to include teachers, parents and students, if possible.

### Benefits of a Wellness Committee:

- Great for parent engagement and for people with similar concerns about students' health and overall wellness.
- Brings teachers and staff together to find solutions for school wellness issues.
- Can support healthy fundraisers and events, draft wellness policies or provide recommendations on topics ranging from drinking more water and improving oral health to physical activity and nutrition.
- May be an extension of a Parent Advisory Committee, Parent-Teacher Association or a stand-alone committee.

The work of a Wellness Committee does not need to end once there is improved access to drinking water. Wellness Committees often tackle issues such as nutrition and physical activity as well. For more ideas and resources, we recommend checking out Action for Healthy Kids at [www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org).

### Tips for Strengthening Committees:

- Meet at least once a month.
- Identify and build upon people's strengths.
- Find out what people like to do and what they value, then identify projects they can work on.
- Start with small projects that will lead to relatively near-term success, are highly visible and will give your committee a sense of accomplishment.