

For Immediate Release: Date
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SODA IN SCHOOLS MAY CAUSE MORE OBESITY IN KIDS

COALITION FOR HEALTHY CHILDREN CONCERNED OVER SCHOOL DISTRICT'S PLANS

Your town, PA, date, 2004 - The School District is currently considering an exclusive contract with beverage companies that may significantly increase the amount of high sugar drinks sold in schools. The Coalition for Healthy Children is calling on the School District to offer school students only healthy drinks at school.

"The school district must not put more children at risk by putting sugar filled drinks in our schools," said Sue Smith, who organized the Coalition for Healthy Children to reform the school district's beverage policy. "We urge the district to adopt nutritional standards for any items that are to be sold or served in schools."

Most schools in the district currently have at least one vending machine that sells drinks high in sugar. The School District's proposal would increase beverage sales through placement of more vending machines in schools, provide marketing and advertising opportunities for beverage companies, and specifically target elementary schools for increased soda sales.

"As obesity continues to be a major health problem for children across the nation, we have to make sure that our schools don't make the situation worse," says Smith.

According to a recent study by Children's Hospital in Boston, children who drink soda are at higher risk of becoming obese. In addition they found:

- One extra soda a day increases a child's chance of becoming obese by 60 percent.
- The average teenager is getting 15-20 extra teaspoons a day of added sugar from soft drinks.

"Soda consumption among children has doubled in the last decade while childhood obesity has increase by 30%. Obesity can lead to heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure," stated Dr. Thomas Cola, who directs the diabetes center at the Hospital. "With teens already drinking twice as much soda as milk, do we really want to encourage our kids to drink more?"

Pennsylvania state legislator Gladys Plum has pledged her support to the coalition.

"As a mother, I support good nutrition for all of our children," said Representative Plum.