Background on Water in Schools:
School districts are required by the federal government to make drinking water available to students at no charge in the food service areas during all school meals. Schools can decide how to serve the water, but are encouraged to provide cups for water consumption. States may choose to establish additional water requirements for schools. A school-based water promotion campaign resulted in students being 31% less likely to become overweight than students from schools without the water campaign.1

Louisiana’s Overall Health Rank, based on America’s Health Rankings: 48th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Indicator</th>
<th>Louisiana’s Rank</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>50th</td>
<td>35% of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>48th</td>
<td>12% of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular Deaths</td>
<td>46th</td>
<td>319 deaths per 100,000 pop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why Louisiana Needs Water in Schools:
• Inadequate water intake may result in problems with short-term memory, concentration and energy levels.2
• Most children do not meet the daily recommendations for water, which are between 5 and 14 cups depending on age and activity level.3
• Rates of soda consumption are high in Louisiana, where 31% of youth drink at least 2 sodas per day.4
• 40% of Louisiana youth (ages 10-17) are overweight or obese.5
• Research suggests that some youth have negative perceptions of water fountains and water quality at school.6 Broken water fountains and long lines to get water are other barriers cited by Louisiana school staff.

Example of a State-Level Law:
West Virginia State Board Policy 4321.1 (2008) requires schools to offer free, unflavored water to students during meal times and throughout the school day. Cups must be available to students if water dispensers are used.

Projected Costs:
• The cost of serving water in schools depends on the method selected by the school. Examples may include the following:8
  1. Water coolers placed on tables (beginning at $17 plus cups)
  2. Filtered bottleless water coolers (beginning at $25 for basic models)
  3. Multiple water fountains (beginning at $350 per water fountain)
• Some costs for water supplies may be covered by the school’s non-profit food service account.
• Though initially more expensive than cups, reusable cups and water bottles save money and reduce waste in the long-term.

Next Steps for Louisiana:
Louisiana can identify barriers to water access in Louisiana schools in order to increase water availability and promote water intake in schools.
**Strengths**

- An assessment of water availability in schools will identify the most efficient methods of serving water in schools.
- Water promotion in schools may lead to increased water consumption.\(^1,2\)
- Sugar-sweetened beverages, unlike water, are high in calories and can increase the risk of overweight, obesity and related diseases like insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.\(^2\)
- By making free, potable water readily available to all students, schools eliminate cost as a barrier to water consumption.

**Barriers**

- Though students may have access to water, classroom policies may prevent them from drinking enough. Research shows that water intake is higher when students are allowed to have water bottles on their desk compared to students with restricted access to water during class.\(^9\)
- A study of water availability in schools will not capture rates of water consumption.

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**References**


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**Additional research briefs on Louisiana Public Health Strategies can be found at prc.tulane.edu/publications**

**Project Staff:**

Mary Kathryn Poole, poolemarykathryn@gmail.com, 985-502-7294
Naomi King Englar, nking2@tulane.edu, 504-988-7410

The Prevention Research Center at Tulane University
1440 Canal St., Ste. 2301 New Orleans, LA 70112

[@TulanePRC](https://twitter.com/TulanePRC) [facebook.com/TulanePRC](https://www.facebook.com/TulanePRC)

The Prevention Research Center at Tulane University is a member of the Prevention Research Centers Program, supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, under cooperative agreement #U48-DP-001948.