



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RELEASES DATA ON TEEN-FOCUSED OBESITY PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) today released evaluation data from its nationally recognized Rethink Your Drink campaign, a teen-focused campaign that ran statewide earlier this year urging teens to switch from sugary drinks like soda and sports drinks to water and other healthier beverages.

Due to the campaign's overwhelming success, DOH is re-launching and will run it through February 2014, with the goal of reaching 100 percent of Hawaii teens. This campaign is part of a comprehensive set of interventions being implemented by the state to address Hawaii's obesity epidemic.

"Reducing the amount of empty calories that our children and teens consume through sugary drinks is critical to the Abercrombie Administration's efforts to curb obesity in our state. Rethink Your Drink has had a significant impact on behavior change among our teens," said Health Director Loretta Fuddy. "This type of public education is essential to improving health and wellness, as it gives teens the information they need to make healthy choices in their everyday lives."

A survey of more than 600 teenagers demonstrated that the campaign reached 54 percent of teenagers throughout Hawaii, and 60 percent of teens who saw the ads reported drinking less sugary drinks as a result of seeing them.

The survey also shed light on the amount of sugary drinks being consumed: nearly half (46 percent) of Hawaii teens drink beverages containing sugar on a daily basis, averaging 8.6 sugary drinks per week — showing teens consume more than any other age group. This amounts to about 1300 extra calories each week that have no nutritional value, representing a substantial caloric contribution to teens' diet. Three out of five teens reported purchasing sugary drinks for themselves during the past week, meaning that teens are making their own decisions with regards to beverage consumption. Currently, one in four high school students and one in two adults in Hawaii are overweight or obese.

Director Fuddy added: "Empowering our keiki in the fight against obesity is essential—they know how to engage their peers. We are happy to have had the thoughts and opinions of youth lead this campaign. To see the influence of their participation within their institution has been amazing. My hope is that this movement spreads to impact teens throughout Hawaii."

Hawaii's Rethink Your Drink campaign was recognized by the National Public Health Information Coalition, winning two Gold Awards and one Silver Award for Excellence in Health Communications. The campaign re-launch will consist of public service announcements on television and print ads displayed in malls throughout the state. In addition, movie theater ads will feature student-produced public service announcements from the 2012 Olelo Youth XChange video competition.

Reducing the consumption of sugary drinks is a nationally recommended strategy for decreasing obesity.

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