

# Public Health Policy Case Study

## Measuring the Implementation of the Alliance School Beverage Guidelines

### POLICY CONTEXT

Child and adolescent obesity is a significant public health challenge in the United States that has grown significantly over the last few decades. In response, public health stakeholders — including governments, schools, private industry, and public health professionals — have pursued opportunities to change the school environment in ways that can potentially help slow and, eventually, reverse this trend. As part of these efforts, in 2005, the American Beverage Association (the national trade association for the non-alcoholic beverage industry) initiated a program to examine beverage purchases in schools. After analyzing its sales volumes in the K-12 school channel, leading members of the ABA, including The Coca-Cola Company, Dr Pepper Snapple Group, and PepsiCo worked with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to develop guidelines designed to reduce the number of beverage calories available in schools. Specifically, the industry agreed to (1) phase out sales of full-calorie soft drinks, (2) shift its product mix toward low- or no-calorie options and (3) reduce portion sizes over a three-year implementation period.

### APPROACH

ABA commissioned Keybridge to monitor school beverage sales prior to the industry's adoption of the beverage guidelines and to independently monitor its progress toward meeting these guidelines after they were announced in May 2006. Keybridge, in collaboration with the three participating beverage companies and their largest bottling companies, developed a system to collect school beverage sales data representing more than 90 percent of the industry. Specifically, Keybridge developed a beverage classification system encompassing nearly two dozen different beverage categories and up to 50 packaging and container configurations. Keybridge separated each company's data based on school channel (e.g., elementary, middle, and high schools) as well as accessibility to students (e.g., some beverages sold in schools are not available to students, such as beverages sold in teacher's lounges). Keybridge also used outside sources to corroborate and validate the company-provided sales data. After analyzing the beverage data, Keybridge developed a benchmark report in 2005 and, in subsequent years, produced annual progress reports that describe the extent to which the industry has implemented the school beverage guidelines from 2006–2010.

### RESULT

The annual reports provide an independent and verified assessment of the industry's progress on fulfilling key aspects of the national School Beverage Guidelines and, by extension, the extent to which the beverage industry has followed through on its commitment to change the school beverage landscape. The reports are frequently referenced to highlight the industry's success in achieving its public health goals, and the findings have been featured in a major national advertising campaign. All participating parties agree that the independent monitoring process Keybridge developed and implemented was critical to the initiative's success. The findings are also featured in a Keybridge-authored article on industry self-regulation, which was published in the American Journal of Public Health.