



EVALUATION BRIEF FOR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Healthy default beverages in kids' meals

Nutrition Policy Institute • Research Brief • October 2019

WHAT WE DID: SNAP SHOT

In 11 counties throughout California, we:

- > Ordered kids' meals in 111 restaurants, including in 80 drive-thru lanes
- > Observed the menu board and general ordering environment
- > Interviewed 84 customers who ordered kid's meals
- > Collected 157 cups/drink containers



Starting January 1, 2019, California law, Senate Bill 1192, requires that kids' meals offer water and/or unflavored milk as the default beverage.

NPI visited restaurants in **December 2018** to learn about restaurant practices prior to the new requirement so that we can compare to changes after the law goes into effect. We found:

Promising practices:

- > Many restaurants **already had voluntary default beverage** policies that were somewhat different from the new law
- > **53% of drive-thru and 61% of inside menu boards** had **unflavored milk** listed as an option.
- > **33% of drive-thru and inside menu boards** listed **bottled water** as an option.

Areas for improvement:

- > Often cashiers did not offer default beverages first but instead asked **"What drink do you want with that?"**:
Drive thru: **78%**; Inside **39%**
- > When asked what the options were, cashiers frequently mentioned **sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs)**:
Drive thru: **80%**; Inside **45%**
- > **43% of the surveyed customers** chose **sugar-sweetened beverages** with the kid's meal

Smallest fountain cup that came with the kids' meal: 11 fl oz

Largest fountain cup that came with kids' meal: 27 fl oz

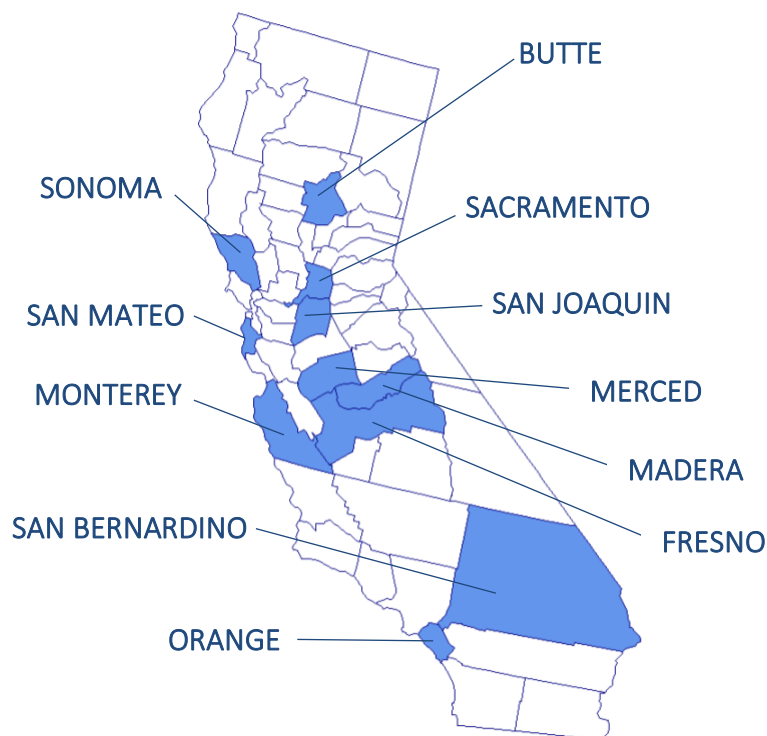


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WHERE WE WENT AND WHAT WE DID



COUNTY	OBSERVATIONS	SURVEYS
Butte*	6	
Fresno	2	1
Madera	6	4
Merced	22	21
Monterey	6	3
Orange	24	24
Sacramento*	5	
San Bernardino	16	6
San Joaquin	17	11
San Mateo	5	14
Sonoma*	2	
Total	111	84

*No customer surveys were conducted in Butte, Sacramento, or Sonoma counties because no customers ordered a kids' meal inside the restaurants while we were there.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERVENTION PLANNING

NPI is working with Local Health Departments and the California Department of Public Health to provide supplemental materials and support to restaurants to promote healthy default beverages. Information from this data collection effort, combined with input from restaurant managers, LHDS, and CDPH will be used to design these materials and support.

- > Most major fast-food restaurants say **70% of their sales** come through the drive-thru¹: to have the greatest impact we must reach drive-thru customers.
- > Customers **base their choice on what's shown on the menu board, what cashiers say, or both**; therefore, adapting menu boards and the way staff present the beverage options is critical.
- > Local environmental health departments and corporate management of chain restaurants are providing varying degrees of information and training about the law and how to implement it.
- > Intervention approaches need to complement environmental health and/or corporate information as well as what's shown on the menu board to help customers make healthy beverage choices when ordering kids' meals.

1. The 2018 QSR Study. Accessed from <https://www.qsr magazine.com/reports/2018-qsr-drive-thru-study> on June 19, 2019.



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