Background

- In Contra Costa County, only 26% of teens drank 8 or more glasses of water the previous day while 62% drank 2 or more sodas.
- Substituting water for sugar-sweetened beverages can help reduce weight gain and the risk of developing chronic diseases.
- Healthy hydration while at high school can be a challenge for teens when free, safe, and appealing water is not accessible throughout the school day.

Objective

- To engage youth in conducting research to better understand a teen hydration issue and create solutions to encourage students to meet daily water recommendations.

Methods

- An environmental scan revealed 8 water fountains throughout the school, most did not work properly and/or did not have sufficient water flow.
- We engaged a group of students using the Youth-Led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) framework. Teens developed survey questions and used the Qualtrics survey system, including the offline app.
- The survey assessed student beverage choices, habits, access to drinking water, and appeal of water. Surveys were collected from 320 students - a 57% response rate.
- The resulting quantitative data were analyzed using Qualtrics descriptive statistics options.

Results

- Teens discovered 97% of students were drinking water, but 60% were not drinking water provided at school.
- Instead, students brought water from home because of broken fountains and a perception that the school’s water was not safe.
- Consequently, the average student daily water consumption was 4.92 cups, less than the 8-cup recommendation.
- Using the research-based information, the teens created infographics to share their findings schoolwide and presented to the school board to advocate for water refilling stations. Board members approved funds to install six stations.

Discussion

- The YPAR framework helped us better understand the high school hydration issue.
- Teens plan to continue with peer education and promote existing water fountains and upcoming stations – encouraging students to meet daily water recommendations.

Funding: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education.