

FACT SHEET: Keep Soda Out of Mississippi Elementary Schools

A one-page summary for parents, educators, and school board members

The Problem at a Glance

| Metric | Mississippi | National Average |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Youth obesity rate (ages 6–17) | 24.3% | 16.1% |
| Rank among 50 states | #1 (highest) | — |
| Sugar in one 12-oz soda | 42 grams | — |
| AHA daily limit for children | 25 grams | — |
| % of daily limit in one soda | 168% | — |

Why This Matters

Mississippi's children are in crisis. Nearly 1 in 4 youth ages 6–17 are obese — the highest rate in the nation. Providing soda in elementary schools normalizes excessive sugar consumption during the most formative years of a child's life.

Health Consequences of Regular Soda Consumption in Children

- **Obesity & Type 2 Diabetes** — Sugar-sweetened beverages are the single largest source of added sugars in children's diets. Each additional daily serving increases obesity risk by 60% (Harvard longitudinal study).
- **Cardiovascular Disease Risk** — The American Heart Association warns that excess added sugars raise triglycerides, blood pressure, and markers of

inflammation — even in children.

- **Dental Destruction** — The WHO confirms that sugary drinks are a primary driver of dental caries. Mississippi already ranks among the worst states for children's oral health.
 - **Metabolic Harm** — Liquid sugars bypass satiety signals, causing insulin spikes without fullness — training young bodies toward metabolic dysfunction.
 - **Academic Impact** — Sugar crashes impair concentration, memory, and classroom behavior. Studies link high sugar intake to reduced academic performance.
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What Mississippi Law Already Says

The **Mississippi Healthy Students Act (2007)** restricts competitive foods and beverages in schools. However, enforcement gaps and vending machine contracts still allow sugary drinks to reach students in some districts.

Current rules require: No soda during meal service in elementary schools. But gaps remain in after-school programs, fundraisers, and celebrations.

What You Can Do

1. **Attend your next school board meeting** — Request that the wellness policy explicitly ban all sugar-sweetened beverages on elementary campuses, including events and fundraisers.
 2. **Write to your superintendent** — Ask for a district-wide audit of beverage availability in elementary schools.
 3. **Rally other parents** — Share this fact sheet at PTA meetings. Collective voices are harder to ignore.
 4. **Propose alternatives** — Water, unflavored milk, and 100% fruit juice (≤8 oz) are healthy, kid-approved options.
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Key Sources

- CDC — “Rethink Your Drink” & “Added Sugars” (2026)
 - American Heart Association — Scientific Statement on Added Sugars and CVD Risk in Children (2016)
 - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation — State of Childhood Obesity, Ages 6–17 (2023–2024)
 - Mississippi Dept. of Health — Childhood Obesity (2025)
 - American Academy of Pediatrics — Snacks, Sweetened Beverages, and Schools (2015, reaffirmed 2023)
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Prepared May 2026 | Share freely | Download the full report at your school board's next meeting.