Preliminary Drinking Water Needs Assessment for Schools

This document outlines a preliminary drinking water needs assessment for school districts interested in considering to implement an interim source of safe water for their drinking water challenges. Identifying the specific characteristics and needs of your schools is the first step that you need to do. This information is very important to share because it will help inform on what suitable interim drinking water solution option(s) you have, in order to evaluate and ultimately select a solution that meets your needs. This preliminary needs assessment asks questions about the location of the school district, students/staff population, main water source, water quality, alternative water source(s) provided, water usage, and water access, so that a comprehensive understanding of the schools’ drinking water needs can be developed.

Please note that local community based non-profit organizations who have worked with schools and communities on drinking water challenges, local county health departments, local water districts, and funding agencies can serve as resources to help answer some of these questions.

1. Location
   a. Where is the school district located? Is the community considered rural and/or low income?
   b. Does the area have a history of agriculture, industry, or water quality challenges?

2. Students/staff population
   a. How many students and staff are at each school? Please list.

3. Main water source
   a. Is the school district a customer of the local water district (i.e. pay a bill to a water system such as a Public Utilities District or Community Services District) or use its own well?
   b. Is the school district on the same water source or are there are multiple sources of water (e.g. certain schools are served by different water sources)?

4. Water quality
   a. Is the school on a “do not drink” order? If so, how long has this persisted?
   b. Does the water source have water quality problems (e.g. nitrates, arsenic, DBCP, uranium, bacteria, 1,2,3-TCP, etc.)? If served by a public water system, you can check the Consumer Confidence Report from the local water district
   c. Does the school check for lead or copper? If so, what are the results?

5. Alternative Water source(s)
a. Does the school provide bottled water? If so, do you sell it to students or provide it for free? How much do you spend per month?
b. At lunch time, do you serve water (such as in water dispensers or pitchers)?
c. Are there vending machines that sell bottled water on campus?

6. Water usage
a. Does the school plumbing separate the drinking water from irrigation or nonpotable use (e.g. bathrooms)?
b. What is the school’s water usage data (metered data can come from water districts)?
c. If the school is served by a water system, how much does the school pay for the water bill?

7. Water access
a. What are the areas on campus that there are points of water access? E.g. are there drinking water fountains in gyms, classrooms, cafeterias? Does the school offer and cook hot lunches with the tap water? Does the school have water stations or dispensers to fill up water bottles?
b. What is the total inventory of all the possible water access points – number and location? Is there a map showing the locations of these drinking water fountains/faucets? Please note – this may require an in-person site visit to assess.
c. What areas/which water access points have the most usage and are most frequented?
d. What are the existing conditions for plumbing infrastructure or drinking water fountains? Are there any areas that are under consideration for upgrades or improvements?

8. Funding
a. Has school applied or is planning to apply for funding to have an interim source of safe water (e.g. Proposition 84 emergency funding)?
b. Has school applied or is planning to apply for funding to address the water quality challenges with a long-term solution, such as treatment, new well, or consolidation to a nearby public water system?