There's a great new opportunity to improve drinking water access and water quality issues in schools throughout California. An estimated 25 percent of California schools have not been able to provide free, fresh drinking water to students at meal times every day; despite state and federal laws that require it. Adequate water consumption is critical to basic health. If children and youth do not drink water, they often drink sugary beverages instead which can lead to diseases like type-2 diabetes and childhood obesity. There also is a strong correlation between educational achievement and hydration. Without water, learning is impaired. However, if the available water is contaminated, children should not drink it.

The California State Water Resources Control Board has $9.5 million in grant funding available through the Drinking Water for Schools Grant Program, funds that may be used to:

- Install or replace water bottle filling stations or drinking water fountains (with or without treatment devices)
- Install Point-of-Entry (POE) or Point-of-Use (POU) treatment devices for water bottle filling stations, drinking fountains, or other fixtures that provide water for consumption (e.g. faucets in kitchen sink or ice machines)
- Install/Replace/Repair drinking water fixtures necessary to eliminate lead if school has tested for lead and found contamination
- Provide interim water supplies while a permanent solution is being implemented

Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) are eligible to apply for these funds, this includes schools serving kindergarten through 12th grade and preschools and daycares that are located on school property.

During the first nine months, only LEAs serving Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) with a population of 20,000 may apply. After the initial window, LEAs serving DACs with more than 20,000 may apply. County offices of education are encouraged to apply on behalf of multiple small districts within their jurisdiction, potentially reducing costs through joint purchasing and contracting.

If your school or district is interested in learning more about this exciting new opportunity to improve student access to safe drinking water you can access the guidelines and application at:

www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/schools/

Technical assistance is available, for more information, contact RCAC at:

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