

OVERVIEW OF THE IOM REPORT ON *FOOD MARKETING TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH: THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY?*

Through a congressional directive, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requested that the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies conduct a study to review the influence of food marketing on the diets and health of children and youth in the United States. *Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?* explores what is known about current food and beverage marketing practices, the influence of these practices on the diets and health of children and youth, and public and private strategies that can be used to promote healthful food and beverage choices in children and youth. The report was prepared by an Institute of Medicine (IOM) committee, chaired by Dr. J. Michael McGinnis, that convened 16 members with expertise in nutrition, child and adolescent development, psychology, media and advertising, consumer marketing and behavior, social marketing, evaluation, education, public health and policy, industry (e.g., food, beverage, and entertainment), constitutional law, and business ethics.

Dietary Patterns of Children and Youth

The diets of America's children and adolescents depart substantially from recommendations and reflect a pattern that puts their health at risk. Overall, children and youth are not achieving basic nutritional goals. They are consuming excessive calories and exceed recommended intakes of total fat, saturated fats, added sugars, and sodium. The report reveals that the dietary and health-related patterns of children and youth are influenced by the interplay of many factors, including genetics and biology, culture and values, economic status, physical and social environments, and commercial and media environments. Among these environments, the media, in its multiple forms and broad reach, plays a central socializing role for young people and is an important channel for promoting branded food and beverage products in the marketplace.

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

- Along with many other intersecting factors, food and beverage marketing influences the diets and health prospects of children and youth.
- Food and beverage marketing practices geared to children and youth are out of balance with recommended healthful diets and contribute to an environment that puts their health at risk.
- Food and beverage companies, restaurants, and marketers have underutilized the potential to devote creativity and resources in promoting food, beverages, and meals that support healthful diets for children and youth.
- Achieving healthful diets for children and youth will require continued, multisectoral, and integrated efforts that include industry leadership and initiative.
- Public policy programs and incentives do not currently have the support or authority to address many of the current and emerging marketing practices that influence the diets of children and youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A Multi-Faceted Approach to Improve the Diet-Related Health of Children and Youth

This report presents recommendations for different segments of society to guide the development of effective marketing strategies that promote healthier food, beverage, and meal options to children and youth. Recommendations are also offered for research necessary to chart the path of future improvements, and the capacity to monitor and track improvements in marketing practices that have an influence on children's and youth's diets and diet-related health. These recommendations reflect the current context and information in a rapidly changing environment, and should be implemented together as a package to support and complement one another.

Food, Beverage, and Restaurant Industries

The food, beverage, and restaurant industries should use their creativity, resources, and full range of marketing practices to promote and support more healthful diets for children and youth. To achieve this, the industries should:

- Shift their product portfolios in a direction that promotes new and reformulated child- and youth-oriented foods and beverages that are substantially lower in total calories, lower in fats, salt, and added sugars, and higher in nutrient content.
- Shift their advertising and marketing emphasis to child- and youth-oriented foods and beverages that are substantially lower in total calories, lower in fats, salt, and added sugars, and higher in nutrient content.

- Restaurants should expand and actively promote healthier food, beverage, and meal options for children and youth and provide calorie content and key nutrition information on menus and packaging that is prominently visible at the point of choice and use.
- Engage the full range of their marketing vehicles and venues to develop and promote healthier, appealing, and affordable foods and beverages for children and youth.

Advertising, Marketing, Entertainment Industry, and Media

The food, beverage, restaurant, entertainment, and marketing industries should work with government, scientific, public health, and consumer groups to establish and enforce the highest standards for the marketing of foods, beverages, and meals to children and youth. To achieve this, it should:

- Work through the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) to revise, expand, enforce, and evaluate explicit industry self-regulatory guidelines beyond traditional advertising to include evolving vehicles and venues for marketing communications.
- Assure that licensed characters are used only to promote foods and beverages that support healthful diets for children and youth.

The media and entertainment industry should direct its extensive power to promote healthful foods and beverages for children and youth. To achieve this, it should:

- Incorporate into the multiple media platforms (e.g., print, broadcast, cable, the Internet, and wireless-based programming) foods, beverages, and storylines that promote healthful diets.
- Strengthen their capacity to serve as accurate interpreters and reporters to the public on findings, claims, and practices related to the diets of children and youth.

Parents, Caregivers, and Families

To support parents, caregivers, and families in promoting healthful diets for children and youth, the government, in partnership with the private sector, should create a long-term, multi-faceted, and financially sustained social marketing program that should:

- Include a full range of evolving and integrated marketing tools with widespread educational and community-based efforts.
- Target parents of children from birth to the age of four years to build skills for selecting healthful and affordable food and beverage choices for their children.
- Offer a reliable support stream that should be in place for social marketing programs through public-appropriated funds and counterpart cooperative support from the businesses that market foods, beverages, and meals to children and youth.

Government

- Government, in partnership with the private sector, should create a long-term, multi-faceted social marketing program targeting parents, caregivers, and families to promote healthful diets for children and youth (see above recommendation).
- Government at all levels should marshal the full range of public policy approaches (e.g., subsidies, taxes, legislation, regulation, federal nutrition programs) to foster the development and promotion of healthful diets for children and youth.
- If voluntary efforts related to advertising during children's television programming are unsuccessful in shifting the emphasis away from high-calorie and low-nutrient foods and beverages to the advertising of healthful foods and beverages, Congress should enact legislation mandating the shift on both broadcast and cable television.

- The nation's formidable research capacity should be better directed to sustained, multidisciplinary work on how marketing influences the food and beverage choices of children and youth.
- The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services should designate a responsible agency, with adequate and appropriate resources, to formally monitor and report regularly on the progress of the various entities and activities related to the recommendations included in this report.

Schools

State and local educational authorities, with support from parents, health authorities, and other stakeholders, should educate about and promote healthful diets for children and youth in all aspects of the school environment (e.g., commercial sponsorships, meals and snacks, curriculum). To achieve this, it should:

- Develop and implement nutrition standards for all competitive foods and beverages sold or served in the school environment.
- Adopt policies and best practices that promote the availability and marketing of foods and beverages that support healthful diets.
- Provide visible leadership in this effort by public and civic leaders at all levels such as the National Governors Association, the State and Local Boards of Education and the Parents Teachers Organization, as well as trade associations representing private-sector businesses such as distributors, bottlers, and vending machine companies that directly interface with the school administration.

State of Food and Beverage Marketing to Children and Youth: Influence on Diets and Health

The commercial advertising and marketing of food and beverages are intersecting factors that influence the diets and diet-related health of children and youth. The review indicates that, among many factors, food and beverage marketing influences the preferences and purchase requests of children, influences short-term consumption, may contribute to less healthful diets, and contributes to an environment that puts their health at risk.

- Advertising and marketing messages reach young consumers through a variety of vehicles such as television, radio, magazines, music, and the Internet, and through many different venues including homes, schools, child-care settings, grocery stores, shopping malls, theaters, sporting events, and airports.
- Food advertising to children affects their preferences, purchase behaviors, and consumption habits for different food and beverage categories, as well as for different product brands.
- Food and beverage advertising on television influences children ages to 2–11 years to prefer and purchase high-calorie and low-nutrient foods and beverages.
- Of the more than \$200 billion children and youth collectively spend annually, the top four leading items children ages 8–12 years select, without parental permission, are high-calorie and low-nutrient foods and beverages.
- Food and beverages, particularly candy, carbonated soft drinks, and salty snacks or chips, were ranked among the top leading items that teens ages 13–17 years old purchase with their own money.
- The purchase influence of children and youth increases with age and is currently estimated at \$500 billion for 2–14 year-olds.

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Download fact sheets and the executive summary at: www.iom.edu/kidsfoodmarketing.

Copies of *Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?* are available at www.nap.edu.