

Prevention Alliance

TOPIC: FOOD MARKETING

GOAL: Reduce the marketing of unhealthy food.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

What we choose to eat and drink is based on a number of factors: personal tastes and preferences, financial constraints, availability and accessibility, and nutrition literacy, for example. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are also greatly influenced by marketing, such as advertisements, packaging, product placement, and endorsements. Food and beverage companies spend billions of dollars each year marketing their products. In fact, the food and beverage industry spends \$2 billion each year marketing to children alone. Unfortunately, they promote and market a lot of unhealthy products to adults and children. For instance, more than [98% of TV food ads](#) viewed by children are for products high in fat, sugar, and/or sodium. Additionally, placing products at the end of aisles or in checkout lanes can increase sales fivefold. It is no surprise then that [48% of supermarket sales](#) of candy, gum, soft drinks, and other similar items occur at the checkout lane where the product is displayed at eye-level and the shopper is distracted and fatigued from just having made other purchase decisions.

VALUES STATEMENT:

Adults and children alike are influenced by marketing. Children in particular are very susceptible to the influence of advertising and more easily swayed to choose unhealthy foods and drinks. [Research](#) has shown that TV food ads increase children's preferences for the advertised brands and requests to parents for the advertised foods. African American and Latino children and adolescents are exposed to higher levels of marketing for unhealthy foods and beverages compared to their White counterparts, which can widen the health disparities that already exist. Marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks leads to purchase and consumption, which in turn contributes to the obesity epidemic and the rise of chronic diseases. According to the [CDC](#), if trends continue, one in three U.S. adults will have diabetes by 2050. In [Washington State](#), the adult obesity rate could reach 55.5% by 2030.

EXISTING EFFORTS: Initiatives are underway to reduce the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages:

- The [Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative](#) is a voluntary program comprised of many of the largest food and beverage companies, including The Coca-Cola Company, General Mills, Inc., Kraft Foods Group, Inc., and McDonald's USA,. The program aims to "shift the mix of foods advertised to children under 12 to encourage healthier dietary choices and healthy lifestyles" through industry self-regulation. However, companies continue to find ways to market high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and beverages to young people.
- The [San Francisco Unified School District Commercial-Free Schools Act](#) commits to providing students with healthy snacks and beverages and prohibits the district from entering into an exclusive contract with a soft drink or snack food company and buying curriculum materials that contain identifiable brand names.
- [Santa Clara County](#) and [San Francisco](#) enacted ordinances prohibiting toys to be given away with unhealthy fast food meals.

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- The [Healthy Check-Out Lane project](#), funded by the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, promotes healthy eating by placing healthy food options at grocery store checkout lanes.
- The [Seattle School Board](#) voted to keep the advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages out of its schools.

POTENTIAL PSE STRATEGIES: Opportunities may exist to:¹

- Supermarkets and other retail stores:
 - Require that checkout lanes contain healthy food and beverages.
 - Regulate the pricing of unhealthy foods and beverages.
 - Limit the total amount of store window space that can be covered by signs.
 - Enact regulations that place high-calorie, low-nutrient foods at the back of the store, behind the counter, or in locations other than at the end of aisles or checkout lanes.
 - Require shelf signage near sugary drinks and other unhealthy foods to alert consumers of health effects of the product.
- Restaurants and other food service establishments:
 - Ensure restaurant meals marketed to children are healthy.
 - Prohibit new fast-food restaurants from opening near schools or other locations with a youth population.
 - Support regulation that prohibits toys from being given away with unhealthy fast food meals. See [NPLAN's model ordinance for healthier toy giveaway meals](#).
- Schools
 - Prohibit the acceptance of food/beverage industry sponsorships by schools.
 - Promote the adoption of school district policies that prohibit the advertising of unhealthy foods and drinks on school grounds. See [NPLAN's sample policy](#).
 - Ban unhealthy food and beverage advertising on school buses.
- Elsewhere in the community
 - Prohibit the advertising of sugary drinks and unhealthy foods on or near schools, playgrounds, youth centers, and other facilities used by youth.
 - Support a study on the profitability of selling of healthy products in schools and at checkout lanes.
 - Ensure that vending contracts limit the sale and advertising of unhealthy food and beverages in parks and other venues visited by children and adolescents.
 - Ban all commercial billboards except those located on the site of the advertised establishment.

RESOURCES:

[Protecting Children From Harmful Food Marketing: Options for Local Government to Make a Difference](#)

– Jennifer Harris and Samantha Graff

¹ Strategies are categorized and modeled after *Table. Local Policy Options to Restrict Marketing of Unhealthy Foods to Children* in [Protecting Children From Harmful Food Marketing: Options for Local Government to Make a Difference](#)

The logo for Prevention Alliance features a blue curved line above the text "Prevention Alliance" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

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[Overview of the IOM Report on *Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?* – Institute of Medicine](#)

[Food and Beverage Marketing to Children and Adolescents: Limited Progress by 2012, Recommendations for the Future](#) – Health Eating Research, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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