

Unhealthy Food and Beverage Marketing to Young Children

A Guide for Community Groups

The marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to young children is pervasive in our communities. Unfortunately, it is mostly unhealthy foods that are being marketed, which negatively impacts children's health and well-being. Studies have shown that marketing influences children's tastes, purchase requests, and brand recognition.

Today's marketing goes far beyond traditional television, radio, and billboard advertising. Marketers also entice young children using practices like product packaging and location (characters on cereal boxes stare downward to meet children's eyes and certain items are often placed at children's eye height) and "advergames" (advertising disguised as mobile or internet games).

What can community groups do to address the problem of food marketing to young children? Here are a few ideas:



Learn to recognize food marketing in your community.

Start to be aware of food marketing in all forms, from billboards to signage in restaurant windows to the location of products in stores.



Start a conversation about food marketing.

Inform parents and community members. Involve the media.



Engage with people who can change how much marketing is in your community.

Store and restaurant owners and childcare providers are examples of people who can alter their practices to lessen children's exposure to food marketing.



Reach out to local government officials.

Educate officials about the issue and share your concern with them. Use photos to illustrate the problem. Local government officials can adopt policies to promote healthier food marketing. For example:

- In the **City of Baldwin Park**, city staff worked with community stakeholders to develop a citywide **Healthy Corner Store Policy**. The policy aims to promote healthier eating and increase access to fresh produce and healthier foods by establishing best practices for healthy marketing, signage, and floor plans. It also includes an incentive program for corner stores that create healthy store environments. The city council formally adopted the policy in August 2014.
- The **City of Long Beach** established a youth-targeted healthy vending policy. Specific nutritional requirements were developed for beverage vending machines located at “youth sites.” The policy applies on city property that is open to the public and where there is programming specifically for children, such as health centers, libraries, parks, community centers, and youth athletic facilities, among others.

For **additional strategies** to consider in your community, see the list found in *Policy Options to Address Unhealthy Food Marketing*.

For a **fact sheet** to give to local policymakers, see *Regulating Marketing to Young Children: A Guide for Policymakers*.

For a **detailed legal analysis** of policies to address food marketing to young children, see the full report, *Marketing Matters: A White Paper on Strategies to Reduce Unhealthy Food and Beverage Marketing to Young Children*.