



Forum Session Meeting Announcement

Friday, January 12, 2007
11:45am–12:15pm — Lunch
12:15–2:00pm — Discussion

Effects of Food Marketing on Kids' Diets: I'm Lovin' It?

A Discussion Featuring:

J. Michael McGinnis, MD

Senior Scholar
Institute of Medicine (IOM)
Chair, Committee on Food Marketing to Children and Youth
IOM

C. Lee Peeler, JD

President and Chief Executive Officer
National Advertising Review Council
Executive Vice President
National Advertising Self-Regulation
Council of Better Business Bureaus

Bob McKinnon

President
Yellow Brick Road

Location

**Reserve Officers Association
of the United States**
One Constitution Avenue, NE
Congressional Hall of Honor
Fifth Floor
*(Across from the Dirksen Senate
Office Building)*

Registration Required

Space is limited. Please respond
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Effects of Food Marketing on Kids' Diets: I'm Lovin' It?

OVERVIEW

This meeting will examine what is currently known about the relationship between food and beverage marketing practices and obesity in children and youth. It will also explore options for promoting marketing strategies that encourage healthy eating habits and increase consumer demand for healthier products. Findings and recommendations from a December 2005 Institute of Medicine report (Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?) and industry efforts to self-regulate advertising to children will be discussed.

For more information – See Eileen Salinsky, “Effects of Food Marketing to Kids: I’m Lovin’ It?” *National Health Policy Forum, Issue Brief 814, August 15, 2006; available at www.nhpf.org/pdfs_ib/IB814_FoodMarketing_08-15-06.pdf. ■*

SESSION

As the nation’s childhood obesity rate reaches epidemic proportions, debate has intensified regarding the role of food and beverage marketing in shaping the diets and health of children. Some advocates maintain that children are inundated by exposure to high-sugar, high-fat, low-nutrient foods, creating seemingly insurmountable challenges for parents trying to encourage and enforce healthy eating practices. Others contend that, in moderation, all foods can be incorporated into a healthy diet; the marketing of these food and beverage products is a legitimate commercial activity; and parental guidance related to appropriate dietary choices is essential to filtering and balancing media messages. Both of these perspectives have face validity, which raises complex questions regarding whether and how to harness the power of marketing to improve the health of children and youth.

A December 2005 report by the IOM examined food and beverage marketing practices, explores the effect of these practices on the diet and health of children and youth, and outlines a variety of public- and private-sector strategies to promote healthier diets. The IOM committee found that considerable resources are devoted to a broad range of child-focused food marketing activities (including television advertising, in-school promotions, and Internet-based “advergames”) and that these efforts are effective in influencing children’s food preferences.

Although increased exposure to media is associated with childhood obesity, the IOM found that the available evidence does not conclusively

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202/872-1390
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www.nhpf.org [web]

Judith Miller Jones
Director

Sally Coberly
Deputy Director

Monique Martineau
Publications Director

Forum Session Manager

Eileen Salinsky
Principal Research Associate

establish a direct causal link between food marketing and obesity in children. The IOM did conclude that current food and beverage marketing practices are disproportionately focused on low-nutrient foods and beverages and are, therefore, inconsistent with healthy diets for children. Recommendations seek to better utilize the creativity and reach of marketing efforts to promote good nutrition.

The food, beverage, restaurant, advertising, and entertainment industries are taking steps to address these concerns. In response to the IOM report and with guidance from the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Health and Human Services, the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) of the Council of Better Business Bureaus has undertaken a comprehensive review of its voluntary guidelines for the regulation of children's advertising. Established in 1974, the CARU standards¹ set parameters for responsible advertising practices to children aged 12 years and younger. Although they are broadly oriented to any type of advertising directed at children and are not focused solely on food and beverage products, the standards clearly direct that advertising to children should be truthful, accurate, and developmentally appropriate, especially to young children's cognitive abilities.

Individual food and beverage manufacturers and industry trade associations, such as the Grocery Manufacturers of America, have also developed self-regulatory principles. In recent months, major beverage manufacturers and the trade association that represents them, the American Beverage Association, voluntarily agreed to discontinue the sale of sugar-sweetened soft drinks in elementary and middle schools. A clearer understanding of industry's evolving self-regulatory frameworks and changing marketing practices will help policymakers determine whether more direct public policy interventions are warranted.

KEY QUESTIONS

- How do children view and interpret food marketing messages? To what extent do these messages influence their food choices?
- How do food, beverage, and restaurant companies and marketing research firms develop effective media campaigns to build consumer demand for their products? How might these strategies be adapted to promote healthy choices? To what extent have the food, beverage, restaurant, entertainment, and advertising industries already begun to move in this direction?
- Are existing voluntary, industry-supported self-regulatory standards for advertising to children sufficiently robust to address newer forms of marketing practices (for example, online interactive games, paid product placement in children's programs, use of cartoon spokescharacters, and "viral" marketing)? How might these standards or the enforcement of these standards be improved?

- What role should the federal government play in either regulating or supporting marketing efforts that promote healthy diets and physical activity for children?

SPEAKERS

J. Michael McGinnis, MD, is a leading expert on health promotion and disease prevention and chair of the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Food Marketing to Children and Youth. Dr. McGinnis will provide a comprehensive overview of the committee's findings and recommendations.

C. Lee Peeler, JD, is president and chief executive officer of the National Advertising Review Council (NARC) and executive vice president, National Advertising Self-Regulation, Council of Better Business Bureaus. Mr. Peeler joined NARC in September 2006, following a 33-year career at the Federal Trade Commission. He has spoken and testified widely on consumer protection issues, including truth in advertising, consumer credit, electronic commerce, privacy, and data security.

Bob McKinnon is the president of Yellow Brick Road, a social marketing firm that specializes in issues related to children and their families. Mr. McKinnon has experience working with a variety of federal and state agencies and served a key role in the development of the VERB campaign of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

ENDNOTE

1. *Perspectives on Marketing, Self-Regulation, & Childhood Obesity*, report on a joint workshop (held in July 2005) of the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Health and Human Services, April 2006; available at www.ftc.gov/os/2006/05/PerspectivesOnMarketingSelf-Regulation&ChildhoodObesityFTCandHHSReportonJointWorkshop.pdf.



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