

# Recommendations for Responsible Food Marketing to Children

## Healthy Eating Research

Building evidence to prevent childhood obesity

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### Introduction

Children in the United States grow up surrounded by food and beverage marketing, which primarily promotes products with excessive amounts of added sugar, salt, and fat, and inadequate amounts of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.<sup>1</sup> Food, beverage, restaurant, and entertainment companies use a diverse array of marketing strategies and tactics to target children and adolescents. In addition to traditional advertising on television, companies reach children with newer digital media through websites, social media, and mobile devices.

The marketing of unhealthy foods to children and youth is a major public health concern. Companies market food and beverage products to children by ensuring they are ubiquitously available, in appealing packages,<sup>2</sup> and at affordable prices. Children are exposed to marketing on a daily basis in schools, restaurants, stores, and other community venues they frequent. Marketing practices also include promotions and incentive programs designed so that children will remember, prefer, and select specific company brands.<sup>3</sup>

The following *Recommendations for Responsible Food Marketing to Children* were developed by a panel of experts convened by *Healthy Eating Research*, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to provide a comprehensive set of model definitions for food marketing practices directed to children. These recommendations are intended to provide guidance to a broad range of stakeholders, including food and beverage manufacturers, retailers, restaurant companies, media and entertainment companies, industry trade associations, advertisers, marketers, government agencies, regulators and other policymakers, advocates, and researchers.

The definitions cover the broad range of marketing approaches commonly used, as well as the characteristics that define which marketing practices should be considered as directed to children. This guidance provides a comprehensive framework that, when paired with



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sound nutrition criteria, will assist stakeholders' efforts to continue to improve food marketing to children. While the panel focused on defining food marketing practices and not on developing nutrition criteria, it is critical to have strong nutrition standards and criteria for foods and beverages marketed to children. General references to nutrition criteria within this document do not imply endorsement of any existing criteria and are made with the assumption that responsible food marketing to children can only be achieved when all child-directed marketing practices are addressed and the foods and beverages marketed meet strong nutrition criteria.

The authors recognize that food and beverage marketing is a dynamic field that adapts rapidly to changing market opportunities, technology, and the regulatory environment. This document highlights many approaches used to advertise and market to children. There is a continuing need to regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of industry marketing practices on children and to update this document as media and marketing practices evolve. Continued attention to these issues will help support a healthier food marketing landscape for children.



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## Rationale for Developing Recommendations for Responsible Food Marketing to Children

Nearly one-third of American children and adolescents are affected by overweight or obesity.<sup>4</sup> The overwhelming majority of children and youth consume a diet that is inconsistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.<sup>5</sup> Their diets are too low in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and too high in sodium, saturated fats, and added sugars. Many of the foods and beverages that are heavily marketed to children contribute to poor diet quality, high calorie intake, and excess weight gain. In addition, food and beverage marketers increasingly target African-American and Latino children—populations at increased risk for overweight and obesity.<sup>6,7</sup>

In 2006, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies concluded that food marketing is a risk factor for unhealthy diets and contributes to childhood obesity.<sup>8</sup> The IOM recommended that the food, beverage, restaurant, and entertainment industries 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 the standards recommended by IOM, two key aspects of food marketing to children must be addressed: 1) the identification of food marketing practices and venues aimed at children, and 2) nutrition criteria for foods and beverages appropriate to market to children. Since the release of the IOM recommendations, the focus of work by government, industry, and advocates has centered on improving the nutrition criteria of the foods and beverages marketed to children. In 2013, food and beverage companies, as part of the Council of Better Business Bureaus' Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI) established a uniform set of voluntary category-specific nutrition standards<sup>9</sup> for participating companies, which took effect in January 2014. Other nutrition criteria for children's food or food marketing include individual food and beverage company nutrition standards; the National Restaurant Association's Kids LiveWell nutrition criteria;<sup>10</sup> voluntary guidelines recommended by the federal Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Food Marketed to Children;<sup>11</sup> Guidelines for Responsible Food Marketing to Children developed by an expert committee convened by the Center for Science in the Public Interest;<sup>12</sup> and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Smart Snacks in Schools Standards.<sup>13</sup>

The focus on establishing nutrition standards has resulted in nutritional improvements of products and new product development by companies. Food, beverage, and restaurant companies have reduced added sugars, salt, and saturated and trans fats, and increased whole grain content in food and beverage products promoted to children.

Media and entertainment companies, including Walt Disney and Sesame Workshop, have aligned their food advertising and character licensing policies with nutrition standards. For example, by 2015, advertising, promotions, and sponsorships through Walt Disney media outlets and businesses will meet the company's updated nutrition guidelines. Sesame Workshop announced royalty-free character-licensing to allow produce companies to use Sesame characters to promote fruits and vegetables to children between 2014 and 2016.

Despite improvements to the overall nutrition profile of some products marketed to children, major loopholes persist for industry self-regulation that allow companies to continue marketing unhealthy foods and beverages to children and adolescents. To address this gap, it is essential to clearly define what constitutes advertising and marketing directed at children.

## Limitations of Existing Food Marketing Definitions

The federal IWG (comprising representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture) was established by Congress to develop a comprehensive set of marketing definitions for advertising and marketing to children and adolescents. However, the IWG focused the majority of its work on the development of nutrition principles. To define what constitutes marketing to children, the IWG deferred to existing definitions the FTC developed in order to gather data from food and beverage companies for its study of youth-directed food marketing expenditures and activities released in 2008<sup>14</sup> and its follow-up study released in 2012.<sup>15</sup>

The FTC definitions are broadly defined to encompass most types of marketing and promotional activities directed to children and youth, while limiting the inclusion of marketing directed primarily at adults. However, the FTC definitions were not designed as policy language, and cannot easily be incorporated into a company's food marketing policies and commitments. Nor are they readily applicable for use by other stakeholders.

The CFBAI provides a set of core principles that participating companies agree to as part of their policies and commitments. However, these principles do not fully cover the age range of children vulnerable to the influence of all food marketing practices. CFBAI definitions of marketing to children do not comprehensively address the wide range of digital and interactive media, venues, techniques, and marketing characteristics employed by businesses to market and advertise food and beverage products directly to children.<sup>16</sup> For example, definitions for marketing in schools do not extend to middle or high schools where the prevalence of unhealthy food and beverage marketing is high and occurring beyond the protection of parents.<sup>17,18</sup>

In addition, existing definitions of child-directed marketing contain loopholes, which exclude child- and youth-targeted product packaging, in-store promotions, and toy premiums. In-store and on-package marketing is the sixth-leading category of food marketing expenditures directed toward children. In 2009, companies spent \$113 million on packaging and in-store marketing to reach youth audiences.<sup>19</sup> These types of marketing activities should be covered by company marketing policies in addition to the child-oriented marketing areas that companies cover now.

Given the limitations in the way the CFBAI defines food marketing aimed at children and difficulty of applying the FTC's marketing definitions in a policy context, a void exists to guide the activities of industry, researchers, advocates, federal, state, and local government agencies, and policymakers as they attempt to assess the impact of the full scope of marketing aimed at children and take steps to improve that marketing. The *Recommendations for Responsible Food Marketing to Children* aim to address this gap.

### Expert Panel Findings and Recommended Model Definitions

Whether food and beverage marketing is directed toward children can be determined by several factors, including the media and other venues in which the marketing is placed, and the content of the marketing, such as subject matter, format, techniques used, and other qualitative characteristics of the messages. The child-directed nature of marketing is determined primarily by the projected audience demographics for the programming or other venue in which the marketing is placed, along with the net impression made by the marketing. If the media, venue, or net impression of

the food and beverage marketing or advertising is determined to be directed to children, foods and beverages that are marketed or advertised should meet nutrition criteria.

The recommendations below define child audience in quantitative and qualitative measures; address the range of food marketing practices aimed at children; and specify the strategies, techniques, media platforms, and venues used to target children.

#### Expert Panel Recommendations for Quantitative Measurements for Child-Directed Marketing

##### *Child Audience Age Range*

In recognition of the special nature and needs of children and young adolescents, child-directed marketing is any marketing that targets children from birth through 14 years of age.

Research demonstrates that current food marketing practices present a significant public health threat for children and adolescents by influencing their food and beverage preferences, purchase requests, and consumption.<sup>20</sup> For many years, evidence of this influence was strongest for younger children; however recent research has shown that older children are also uniquely impressionable and vulnerable to food and beverage marketing.<sup>21</sup>

Adolescents' stage of brain and cognitive development makes them susceptible to marketing overall, and especially to marketing for tempting products that require well-developed self-regulatory abilities to resist. Newer forms of marketing, such as product placement and social and mobile media marketing, often are disguised as entertainment or messages from peers, making them difficult to recognize as marketing, even for older children. Children ages 12 to 14 face heightened risk from the influence of unhealthy food marketing due to their greater independence, higher levels of media consumption, and recent increases in the amount of marketing to children ages 12 and older for unhealthy food and beverage products.<sup>22</sup>

##### *Definitions for Media and Other Venues Directed at Children*

If the media or venue meets one of the criteria below, all marketing and advertisements featured should be for products or brands that meet nutrition criteria.

- Children constitute 25 percent or more of the audience (e.g., viewers, listeners, readers, participants, or visitors) at the time of ad placement or based on projected attendance,<sup>3</sup> or
- Children are the target demographic based on the company's media or marketing plan, the developer's designation, or the description of the projected viewership, listeners, readers, participants or visitors, or
- An assessment of the marketing strategies, techniques, characteristics, and venue suggests that children are the target demographic for the advertising or marketing.

Marketing is targeted to children through child-oriented media and venues, and by utilizing techniques and characteristics especially appealing to children. Most companies participating in the CFBAI define advertising as primarily directed to children if the television, radio, print, or third-party websites for which children (ages 2 to 11) constitute at least 35 percent of the expected audience. However, this metric fails to adequately protect children from the majority of marketing impressions they see for unhealthy food and beverages.

Fewer than half of the food and beverage advertisements viewed by children under age 12 on television qualify as child-directed according to a 35 percent child audience threshold.<sup>23,24</sup> Even advertising during clearly youth-oriented programming, such as holiday children's specials, does not meet the CFBAI criteria for advertising primarily directed to children. On the Internet, none of the top ten child-targeted websites where food advertising was placed, including Nick.com, NeoPets.com, CartoonNetwork.com, and Disney Channel, qualified as child-directed according to the industry criteria.<sup>25,26</sup> In addition, none of the most popular child-targeted advergames, including HappyMeal.com, PFGoldfish.com, FrootLoops.com, and Wonka.com would be considered child-directed according to this audience threshold.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, companies participating in the CFBAI have increased their food advertising to children overall, with the largest increases seen for children ages 12 and older, who are not protected by the current CFBAI definition of children. Children ages 12 and older viewed 25 percent more food ads on television in 2013 than in 2007, prior to implementation of the CFBAI.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Children may be defined as ages 2 to 14, if audience data for children under age 2 is unavailable or unmeasured.

A broader definition of "child-directed programming" is needed to protect vulnerable children from the negative influence of unhealthy food marketing. The recommended definition, which includes advertising on programming with an audience of 25 percent or more children ages 2 to 14, would cover the majority of food and beverage ads viewed by children, but still allow companies to advertise all foods and beverages on programming that is intended primarily for adult audiences.<sup>29</sup>

#### Expert Panel Recommendations for Qualitative Measures for Child-Directed Marketing

##### *Brand Advertising and Marketing*

Brands marketed to children should only contain foods that meet nutrition criteria.

Brands help companies deliver messages about products, confirm credibility, connect and motivate buyers on an emotional level, and increase buyer loyalty. Brand marketing similarly affects children's preferences and choices. Children are particularly brand sensitive and show preferences for brands at a young age,<sup>30</sup> with food brand knowledge increasing significantly from age 3. Research also shows children's brand knowledge is higher for unhealthy than for similarly advertised healthy foods.<sup>31</sup>

One noted limitation of current self-regulatory efforts is that nutrition standards for products marketed to children apply only to the products pictured in media advertising, regardless of how prominently the product is depicted or otherwise featured in the marketing. Many marketing efforts aimed at children show only brief images of specific products and instead focus children's attention on larger brand-related messages. Rather than marketing an individual product, such efforts aim to increase children's knowledge and preference for an entire company, one brand within a company, or a product line without a requirement that the other products included in those featured brands meet nutrition criteria.

For example, a fast-food marketing campaign might focus on a tie-in with a children's movie, toy premium, or a restaurant brand logo with only brief images of a specific children's meal that meets nutrition criteria. Such a campaign encourages children to go to a particular restaurant, but does little to increase demand for the depicted meal that meets the nutrition criteria.<sup>32</sup> When children visit the advertised restaurant, choices often do not meet nutrition criteria.

## Brand Definitions

The following is intended to provide a framework for how brands, and the multiple nuances of brand architecture, are defined in this document. These definitions draw from the American Marketing Association Dictionary with the acknowledgment that, while the consumer packaged goods industry generally adheres to a standard lexicon, there may be variations between how companies communicate their brand architecture.<sup>33</sup>

**Brand:** A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. It can apply to a single product, an entire product line, or a whole company.

**Master brand:** A high-level corporate brand identity under which other products fit. It is part of an overall branding strategy designed to create a close link between a company's individual products and its larger brand. While each product will have an individual brand, each of the individual brands benefit from the positive association with the larger brand.

ex. *PepsiCo, Kellogg Company, Hershey*

**Individual product brand:** Using separate brands for each product, without a master brand to tie them to other brands of that firm. The individual brands are presented to consumers, and the parent company name is given little or no prominence. Individual brands are used when the products are different physically, are of different quality levels, are targeted for different users or uses, or vary in some other way that might cause confusion or loss of sales if brought together under a family brand umbrella.

ex. *Chef Boyardee® (ConAgra), Yoplait (General Mills), Birds Eye® (Pinnacle Foods Group)*

**Corporate, umbrella, or family brand:** Consumer-facing brand used across all the firm's activities that is used on two or more individual products. All products use the same means of identification and have no additional brand names or symbols attached. This brand is how they are known to their stakeholders—consumers, employees, shareholders, partners, suppliers, and other parties. These brands may also be used in conjunction with product descriptions or sub-brands and might be associated with a master brand.

ex. *Cheez-It®, Cheerios, Frito-Lay*

**Endorsed brands and sub-brands:** These brands include a parent brand—which may be a master brand, corporate brand, umbrella brand, or a family brand—as an endorsement to a sub-brand or an individual product brand. The endorsement should add credibility to the endorsed sub-brand in the eyes of consumers.

ex. *Nestle® PureLife®, Kellogg's® Rice Krispies®, Kraft Lunchables*

**Brand line extensions:** A new product that already has at least one other product being sold under a corporate or family brand or sub-brand. Line extensions are usually new flavors, sizes, and/or food forms.

ex. *Kellogg's Rice Krispies cereal, Kellogg's Rice Krispies Gluten-Free cereal, Kellogg's Rice Krispie Treats® Original Bars; Yoplait Original, Yoplait Greek, Yoplait Go-Gurt, Yoplait Greek Frozen Yogurt, Yoplait Original Frozen Yogurt Bars*

The same applies to a brand logo used on a school vending machine. The food and beverage products within that brand offered in the school may meet school nutrition criteria. However, a child will likely encounter a wide range of unhealthy products in the supermarket sold under the same brand logo.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, a child-directed ad may feature a specific healthier product in the ad, but that product may be difficult to locate within a supermarket display that predominantly features unhealthy varieties of the same brand.<sup>35</sup>

This strategy that focuses more on brands than on a specific product can result in companies advertising brands with both healthy and unhealthy versions of the product, provided that only products meeting nutrition criteria are depicted in the ads. Marketing that promotes an overall brand rather than focusing on a specific product allows companies to effectively market substantial portfolios of unhealthy products to children.

To close this loophole, companies should not market products within brands that contain other products that do not meet nutrition criteria unless the product that meets nutrition criteria is the key focus and featured prominently in the marketing.

That is, the product is featured more prominently and/or more time in the advertisement is spent on the product than any other aspect of the ad including, but not limited to, premiums, spokescharacters, movie tie-ins, contests, or other features. The marketing messages focus the child's attention primarily on the product, with the brand message clearly secondary or non-existent. If there are a number of similar-looking products within a brand, then the ad must make it clear that the focus is on the product(s) that meet nutrition criteria. Marketing that falls outside of this definition should be considered non-product specific brand advertising, and hence not be permitted to be marketed to children.

An example of appropriate product marketing would be a television ad that features a beverage meeting nutrition criteria. The ad shows children pouring and sipping that beverage for 16 seconds of a 30-second advertisement; if there are other products within the brand shown that do not meet nutrition criteria, then it must be clear that the beverage featured in the ad is the one that meets nutrition criteria.

Given the wide range of brands and brand architecture in use, marketing that features a brand more prominently than a specific product should depict only those master brands, sub-brands, brand families, or individual product brands in which all products within the recognizable brand meet nutrition criteria. (See text box on page 5 for brand definitions.)

For example:

- If a sign in a little league field generally promotes Cheerios, then all varieties of Cheerios would need to meet nutrition criteria;
- If an ad for Lunchables focuses primarily on a contest and only briefly depicts one variety of Lunchables, then all Lunchables should meet nutrition criteria;
- If a Burger King® kids' meals ad focuses primarily on a toy premium rather than the depicted meal, all Burger King kids' meals would need to meet nutrition criteria;
- Ronald McDonald could only appear at events in schools if all McDonald's products met nutrition standards.

As described above, child-directed marketing of one, or a few, products that meet nutrition criteria within a product line should be allowable only if that product is the primary focus of the marketing, or if the remainder of the product portfolio in the brand meets nutrition criteria. Until this occurs, efforts should be made at the point of purchase, such as supermarket displays and menu boards, to more prominently promote the foods and beverages that meet nutrition criteria over products that do not meet criteria.

### *Marketing Strategies, Techniques, and Qualitative Characteristics*

If marketing utilizes strategies or techniques or has qualitative characteristics appealing to children, regardless of media platform or venue, it should be considered child-directed based upon its net impression. Application of the strategies, techniques, and qualitative characteristics will vary depending on the media venue and the context of the media environment in which they appear. If the net impression is that the marketing is directed to children, then food and beverages that are promoted through the marketing should meet nutrition criteria.

## **Marketing Strategies and Techniques**

Marketing strategies and techniques commonly used in child-oriented marketing include, but are not limited to:

- **Character Licensing and Cross-Promotions:** Using another company's product, brand, trade name, character, or related intellectual property in the advertising or promotion of a food product. Use includes cross promotions with a character, film, theme park, television show, game, toy, or other product to promote a food product or food brand.
  - ◆ *ex. Characters from DreamWorks Animation's Shrek at Burger King or from Disney's Frozen at Subway®*
- **Premiums:** Toys and other items distributed in connection with the sale of any of the company's food or beverage products or meals, whether sold separately, redeemed through coupons, codes, or proofs of purchase, distributed in food packages, or provided automatically with foods or restaurant meals.
  - ◆ *ex. Toys with restaurant children's meals, game or toy provided in a cereal box, contest to win a trip to Legoland,® collect five proofs of purchase and send in for a prize*
- **Celebrity Endorsements:** Promotional messages made by a public figure (including an entertainer, actor, musician, athlete, or other well-recognized person) including appearances in advertisements, verbal statements, demonstrations, or depictions of the name, signature, likeness, or other identifying personal characteristics endorsing or supporting consumption of a company's food products.
- **Product Placement:** Solicited product placements permitting, promoting, or procuring the integration of any food or beverage product, logo, trade name, character, or package into an entertainment vehicle, such as a television or radio program, motion picture, video, music recording, game, magazine, book, or other media. This includes both audio and visual mentions.
- **Sponsorship:** A business arrangement that involves any form of monetary or in-kind payment or contribution to support an event, activity, organization, or venue that directly or indirectly promotes a company's name, brands, products, services, logos, or characters.

- **Cause Marketing and Philanthropy:** Food and beverage marketing in conjunction with a donation to an organization, institution, program, or event.
- **Merchandising:** The use of food or beverage company brand names, logos, characters, products, or other images on goods including, but not limited to, toys, games, dishware, accessories, or children's clothing.
  - ◆ *ex. Peeps® infant onesie, M&M's® Monopoly, Coca-Cola polar bear plush toys, Tony the Tiger spoons*

### Qualitative Characteristics

Qualitative characteristics build upon the FTC's established definitions for child-targeted advertising and promotional activities.<sup>36,37,38,39</sup> This expanded list recognizes the emerging and growing methods marketers use to appeal to children including, but not limited to marketing that:

- Features anthropomorphic objects or animals and animation appealing to children;
  - ◆ *ex. Food that sings or talks*
- Contains animated and/or anthropomorphic characters, either licensed from an entertainment or media company or a mascot associated with a specific food, beverage, or restaurant company brand. If a character is available as a toy for children, the character is by definition child-directed;
  - ◆ *ex. Brand mascots: Buzz Bee, Tony the Tiger, Toucan Sam, Trix Rabbit, Lucky the Leprechaun, Dig Em Frog, Chip the Wolf, Cinnamon and Bad Apple, Chester Cheetah, M&M's characters, Kool-Aid Man, Finn the Goldfish, Keebler® Elf, Pillsbury Doughboy, Crazy-Good Kids, Cookie Guy, Ronald McDonald, Ferris and Friends, Cheesaurus Rex and Mr. Cheese*
  - ◆ *ex. Licensed characters: Dora the Explorer, Diego, SpongeBob SquarePants, Rugrats and Jimmy Neutron (Nickelodeon/Viacom); Shrek, Kung Fu Panda and Madagascar characters (DreamWorks Animation); Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Elmo (Sesame Workshop); Mickey or Minnie Mouse, The Lion King, Toy Story characters, Disney princesses, Nemo, Marvel Entertainment characters including Spiderman and Marvel Superheroes (The Walt Disney Company); and Bugs Bunny, the Flintstones, Scooby Doo, Batman, Superman, Harry Potter and Cartoon Network characters (Warner Brothers Entertainment, Inc.)*
- Contains interactive content and Internet-based applications (apps) that are appealing to children, such as games, digital art creation, virtual pets, avatars, and virtual worlds;
  - ◆ *ex. Neopets.com, Talking Penguin from Crabs and Penguins app, Sour Patch Kids Sour Fling app*
- Prominently features celebrities, famous fictional or other characters, musical performers, models, or athletes, any of whom are popular with children or appear to be ages 14 or under;
  - ◆ *ex. Celebrities/characters: Miranda Cosgrove/iCarly, Ariana Grande/Sam & Cat, Ciara Bravo/Who's the Boss?, Benjamin Flores, Jr./Haunted Hathaways, Twilight, or Harry Potter characters/actors*
  - ◆ *ex. Musical performers: Imagination Movers, Fresh Beat Band, The Laurie Berkner Band*
  - ◆ *ex. Famous fictional characters: Santa Claus, Easter bunny*
- Contains language directly addressing children or that is a direct appeal to children;
  - ◆ *ex. "Hey kids! Listen up!"*
- Uses themes appealing to children, such as fun, cool, excitement, adventure, magic, or fantasy;
  - ◆ *ex. Riding scooters with friends*
- Uses child-appealing packaging or product characteristics;
  - ◆ *ex. Lunchables, green ketchup, Kraft Food's Macaroni & Cheese shaped like dinosaurs, Goldfish® Colors, food shaped like animals (e.g., Angry Birds Cheese Nips) or other objects (e.g., footballs, princesses)*
- Uses child-oriented sounds, voices, music, or images; or
  - ◆ *ex. Jingles, special effects sounds, cereal pieces used as animation or playthings*
- Contains features or is in locations appealing to children, such as games, playgrounds, rides, or mascots.
  - ◆ *ex. games at Chuck E. Cheese's, playground or statue of Ronald McDonald at fast-food restaurant, person dressed as a character at an amusement park or zoo*

## Media Platforms

The following list describes the various media platforms used for marketing directed towards children. If the media or net impression of the marketing or advertising contained in the media is deemed to be directed to children, based upon the “Definitions for Media and Other Venues Directed at Children” or the “Marketing Strategies, Techniques, and Qualitative Characteristics” listed above, then marketed foods or beverages should be limited only to products that meet nutrition criteria.

Foods and beverages advertised or marketed through media targeted to children should meet nutrition criteria, including through:

- Television
- Radio
- Print, including:
  - ◆ Magazines
  - ◆ Posters
  - ◆ Billboards
  - ◆ Books
  - ◆ Activity sheets or booklets
- Digital Platforms<sup>b</sup> including cell phones, smart phones, tablets, personal computers, game consoles, laptops, and other personal digital devices. Examples of advertising and marketing content include, but are not limited to:
  - ◆ Company-owned websites or webpages, including company-sponsored advergames
    - + *ex. Crazy-Good Kids on PopTarts.com, Chuck E. Blocks on chuckedcheese.com*
  - ◆ Advertising on third-party websites, including but not limited to:
    - + Sponsored hyperlinks
    - + Display advertising, banner, or pop-up advertisements
    - + Streaming and in-page audio or video advertisements

<sup>b</sup> To collect any personal information from children, an operator must obtain verifiable positive consent (i.e., opting in) from the child’s parent or guardian per the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act available at [www.coppa.org/coppa.htm](http://www.coppa.org/coppa.htm).

Measured media includes media for which size and demographics are measured by third-party monitoring services or other sources. For “unmeasured” media, such audience measurement services are not available.

- Measured Media: Advertising through television; radio; magazines; and third-party websites.
  - Other Media Directed to Children: Company-owned websites or webpages; company-sponsored advergames; additional digital platforms including mobile media and apps, word of mouth, viral marketing, and geo-location advertising; movies; videos; and video games.
- ◆ Other forms of advertising and marketing which may appear on company-owned or third-party sites or are directed to children via mobile devices, including, but not limited to:
    - + Email messages
    - + Text or short message service (SMS) messaging or instant messaging (IM)
    - + Picture or other multimedia messaging
    - + Mobile broadcasts
    - + Downloads (such as ringtones, wallpapers, and videos)
    - + Games and apps (*ex. OREO® – Twist, Lick, Dunk App*)
    - + Podcasts
    - + Blogs
    - + Social media posts
  - ◆ Viral or word of mouth marketing including promotional messages intended to encourage consumers to discuss or otherwise promote branded content, messages, or product samples to their friends (such as by passing along or sharing a promotional message) and/or providing incentives (financial or otherwise), product samples, or other support to individuals or groups:
    - + Content developed for video, audio, or image file-sharing
    - + Company-sponsored blogs or social networking site
    - + Content posted on the Internet about a food product or brand that is intended to be sent from one person to another (such as through a promotional or “send to a friend” message sent through email, text, or other social media-based sharing)



- ◆ Geo-location advertising: Location-based advertising delivering relevant and contextualized ads or promotions in proximity to a person's surroundings in real-time.

- Movies, Videos, and Video Games

- ◆ Advertising, product placement, or other marketing in or contiguous to a motion picture distributed through movie theaters, videos (*e.g.*, DVD, Blu-ray, or VHS), or digitally delivered (*ex.* Hulu Plus™), or in a video game.

#### Child-Directed Content in Other Venues

Children encounter marketing on a daily basis in the places they live, learn, and play. The majority of this child-directed marketing is for foods and beverages inconsistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and is largely exempt from industry self-regulation. Companies spend nearly \$1 billion dollars on advertising in schools, on food and beverage packages, in stores, and at quick-service restaurants.<sup>40</sup> On average, drinks marketed in schools to children under age 11 contained 16 grams of added sugar per serving; drinks marketed to older children and teens contained more than 18 grams of added sugar per serving.<sup>41</sup> When children are exposed to marketing for kids' meals in restaurants, fewer than 1 percent of all possible kids' meal combinations meet recommended nutrition standards.<sup>42</sup>

However, efforts are underway to promote healthy environments and reduce unhealthy food marketing aimed at children. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently implemented updated regulations to strengthen the nutrition standards for school meals and snacks for all students.<sup>43</sup> In addition, USDA issued a proposed regulation that would ensure that the marketing and advertising of foods and beverages to students in all grades complements these updated nutrition standards for meals and snacks.<sup>44</sup> Schools offer a unique and important opportunity to ensure that students in all grades are provided consistent messages about healthy foods and beverages throughout the campus.

To ensure consistency with USDA meal and snack standards, and to support USDA's efforts to create healthy school environments for all students, the *Recommendations for Responsible Food Marketing to Children* in the school environment cover all students in school. The recommendations also define child-directed marketing occurring in the settings children frequent to help safeguard them from unhealthy food marketing and promote messages about nutritious foods and beverages.

#### *Food Marketing in School Environments*

Advertising or marketing in any school, including pre-schools and elementary, middle, and high schools, is by definition child-directed and should only promote food and beverage products or brands that meet nutrition criteria. School marketing includes food and beverage advertising and other marketing, such as the name or depiction of products, brands, logos, trade marks, or spokespersons or characters, on any property or facility owned or leased by the school district or school (such as school buildings, athletic fields, school buses, parking lots, or other facilities) and used at any time for school-related activities, including, but not limited to the following:

- Signs, scoreboards, or posters
- Curricula, textbooks, websites promoted for educational purposes, or other educational materials (both printed and electronic)
  - ◆ *ex.* Skittles® counting books, branded curricula
- Vending machines, food or beverage cups or containers, food display racks, coolers
- Equipment, uniforms, school supplies
  - ◆ *ex.* pencils, notebooks, textbook covers
- Advertisements in school publications, on school radio stations, in-school television, computer screen savers and/or school-sponsored Internet sites, or announcements on the public announcement (PA) system
  - ◆ *ex.* Channel One, Coolmath-games.com
- Fundraisers and corporate-sponsored programs that encourage students and their families to sell, purchase, or consume products and/or provide funds to schools in exchange for consumer purchases of those products, whether or not they take place on school campuses
  - ◆ *ex.* McTeacher's night, Campbell's Labels for Education®, General Mills Box Tops for Education®
- Corporate-incentive programs that reward or provide children with free or discounted foods or beverages
  - ◆ *ex.* Pizza Hut® Book It!® program

- Commercial sponsorship of materials, programs, events, or teams
- Market research activities
  - ◆ *ex. Free samples, taste tests, or coupons*

#### ***Food Marketing in Other Child-Oriented Settings, Activities, and Events***

If the net impression is that the setting, activity, or event is directed to children, then any marketing should only be for foods and beverages that meet nutrition criteria. Companies should not display a company brand, logo, character, or other company identifier for foods or brands that do not meet nutrition criteria. Marketing in child-oriented settings, activities, and events includes, but is not limited to, displaying names, products, brands, logos, trade marks, or spokespersons or characters through signs, posters, billboards, banners, educational materials, activity sheets, vending machine exteriors, supplies, fundraisers, corporate incentive programs that provide children with free or discounted foods or beverages, taste-tests, coupons, product samples, or promotional items, such as clothing, hats, bags, water bottles, toys, or posters.

- Child-directed settings, activities, and events, include, but are not limited to:
  - ◆ Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, out-of-school time programs
  - ◆ Early care and education settings: Head Start programs, preschools, and child-care facilities
  - ◆ Community recreation facilities: pools, parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, and Little League fields
  - ◆ Amusement parks and zoos

- ◆ Entertainment events aimed at children including, but not limited to: children's concerts, child-oriented sporting events, circus performances, and events featuring children's characters (*ex. Disney on Ice*)
- ◆ Health care facilities that focus on children: children's hospitals, pediatric clinics
- ◆ Children's museums
- ◆ Children's rooms at libraries
- ◆ Children's sports leagues or teams

#### ***Food Marketing in Retail Environments***

If the net impression of the marketing in retail environments suggests that it is directed at children, then any marketing should be solely for food and beverages that meet nutrition criteria.

- Food and beverage packaging, including labeling, for both standard and seasonal products includes package design, words and images, brand equity and licensed characters, games, incentives, premiums, and contests.
- In-store marketing includes standard and seasonal advertising, displays, and promotions at the retail site including, but not limited to:
  - ◆ Displays and promotional materials in stores or restaurants (*ex. posters, table tents, tray liners in restaurants; end-cap, checkout, and freestanding displays in retail stores*)
    - + Paid placement at children's eye level
    - + Free samples
    - + Special menus targeted to children (*ex. restaurant children's meals and menus*)
    - + Mascots (*ex. live Ronald McDonald visits or his likeness used on posters or in play areas*)

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### **About Healthy Eating Research**

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