Marketing’s Impact on Program Effectiveness and Healthy Food Choices in Schools

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Presentation objectives

• Identify the 4 healthy food access areas that rural schools are lagging in

• Identify 3 promising practices for schools

• Discuss 3 actions for decision makers
Students attending rural schools are more likely...

- To attend small schools
- Live in poverty
- Be food insecure
- Unprepared for school
National study


- Principals described school nutrition policies and practices
What are the main findings?

- Junk foods and drinks were equally available across all schools, regardless of location.

- Rural schools were less likely to:
  - ban junk food, fast food advertising at school
  - promote healthy foods
  - serve fruits or vegetables
  - have smaller portions sizes
Why is this important?

- Food access
  - Sugary drinks, fruits and vegetables
- Junk food marketing
  - Linked to obesity
- Promotional strategies
  - Nutrition info, taste preferences, cost sensitive
- Portion sizes
  - Serving sizes have increased over time
Promising Practices

• School Breakfast Program (SBP)

• Ban junk food marketing/promote healthy foods in schools

• Cooperative buying partnerships
Why prioritize school breakfast?

- Broad stakeholder reach
  - Academic performance, healthy diet/weight, hunger
  - School Board Association, School Nutrition Association, Academy of Pediatrics, etc.

- Academic benefits, especially for rural, low income of school breakfast

- School breakfast eaters have better diets and weigh about 4 pounds less than noneaters
Project BREAK! study results

Goal: increase access to school breakfast in rural schools

• Increase in SBP participation among low income students, girls, students of color
• Increase in whole grains and milk
• Decrease in breakfast skipping
• Maintain healthy weights
Currently evaluating:

- Grades
- Absences
- Tardiness
- Disciplinary events
- Health office visits
Opportunities for decision makers

• Support School Breakfast Programs

• Connect schools to local agriculture to offset food costs and increase healthy food access

• Identify creative ways to connect parents and community businesses to schools
Support School Breakfast Programs

- Establish state reimbursements
- Enroll more eligible families
- Review bus schedules, start times
- Create pipeline programs (elementary, middle/jr., high schools)

All school districts are required to arrange bus schedules so that buses arrive in sufficient time for schools to serve breakfast prior to the instructional day. [KY.REV.STAT.ANN. § 158.070]
Support local agriculture

• Food Policy Councils
  – Examine local food systems and provide recommendations to improve access

• Farm to School Programs
  – Connect kids to food; supports local farmers

• Collective purchasing of food for federal school nutrition programs
  – Smaller and rural schools have the most to gain

Legal and policy tools available at the Public Health Law Center.org
Connecting schools, families and businesses

A strength of rural schools…

- 41% of town/rural schools report both family and community involvement in school nutrition policy development
  - 32% of city schools
  - 34% of suburb schools
Family & community involvement

• Having family and/or community help in developing school nutrition policies:
  – Fewer junk food items in schools
  – More fruits/vegetables
  – Smaller portion sizes
  – Pricing strategies
  – Collect parent, student suggestions
  – Provide nutrition information
But not for policies to:

- Ban distributing junk food merchandise
- Ban junk food advertising in school buildings, grounds, bus, publications
Parent outreach/engagement strategies

- School siting decisions can be leveraged to promote greater school and community connectivity
- Shared use of school property
- Afterschool and out-of-school time

Legal and policy tools available at the Public Health Law Center.org
Summary: Food access in schools

• Food access challenges of costs, resources, infrastructure, etc. transcend geography
  – *Most problematic in rural schools*

• National evidence base exists on how to improve food access in school settings
  – *Unique rural challenges*

• Solutions will likely impact multiple settings
  – Child care, after school programs, worksites
Thank you & questions

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