Recommendation Extract

Report Card on Food Marketing Policies: An analysis of food and entertainment company policies regarding food and beverage marketing to children

Studies have found that companies’ compliance with their own policies on food marketing to children is high.

In this study, we set out to meet need by assessing many more companies’ policies and evaluating the relative strength of each policy. Unlike content analyses that have measured the balance of less nutrition versus more nutritious food advertised to children, the Report Card on Food-Marketing Policies assesses the strength of each company’s marketing policy.

Recommendations and Conclusion

All companies that market food to children should have a written food marketing policy that is readily available to the public. All companies should belong to the CBBB’s Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative.

Our analysis revealed that the majority of companies that market food to children did not have a marketing policy. Given the high rates of childhood obesity, the negative impact of obesity on health and health care costs, and the effect of marketing on children’s food choices and preferences, diets, and health, it is essential that all companies that market food to children have a written policy that is readily available to the public.

- Companies should have a marketing policy even if they do not advertise on television.
- Company marketing policies should cover their full range of marketing.
- Most food manufacturers and restaurants need to strengthen their policies for digital marketing, on-package/in-store promotions, and schools.
- Given the considerable weaknesses of the self-regulatory programme for marketing in schools, schools should implement wellness policies, and states should pass legislation or adopt regulations to limit junk-food marketing in elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Entertainment companies should work with the CBBB to set up a track in the CFBAI for them.
- Companies should adopt a strong, uniform set of definitions for marketing “direct to children.”
- Companies should adopt a uniform set of nutrition standards for marketing to children.

Conclusion: In order for self-regulation to result in meaningful change, all food and beverage manufacturers, restaurants, and entertainment companies that market to
children should adopt a uniform set of strong nutrition standards and apply them to the full range of their marketing to children. If substantial progress in corporate marketing practices does not occur by January 1, 2012, the federal government should adopt legislation or regulations to protect children from the marketing of unhealthy foods.