

**Experts estimate that two- to fourteen-year-olds have sway over \$500 billion a year in household purchasing.**

Institute of Medicine (2006)

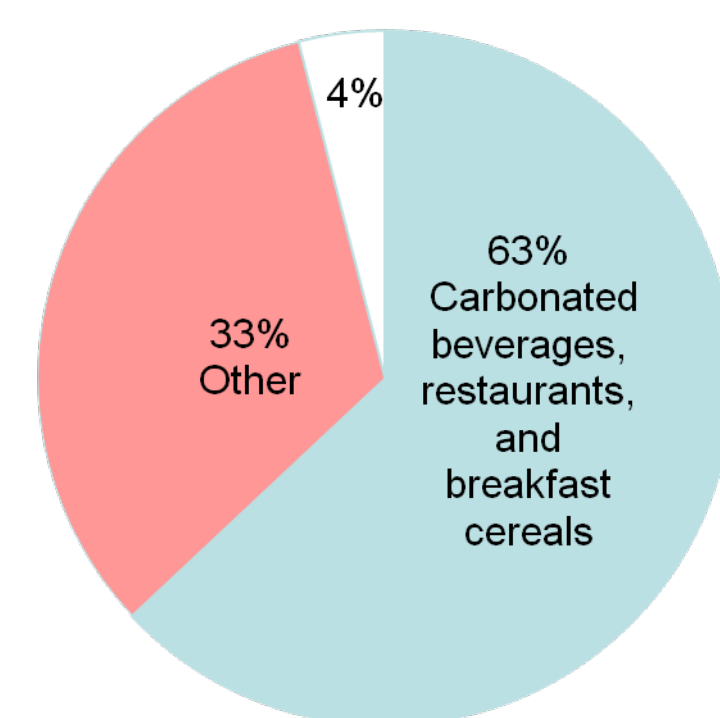
# Food Marketing's Influence on Children: Implications for Parent & Youth Education



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## Introduction

- There is little doubt about the influence of food and beverage marketing on children. Marketing to children is a big business.
- Obesity is a major concern nationwide. Overweight and obese children and adolescents are at greater risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes. They are also at higher risk for being obese as adults.
- Children's diets are inadequate in consumption of fruits/vegetables and dairy products.



## Project Goal

- Develop and deliver a training curriculum for professionals addressing the influence of food and beverage marketing on children.
- Develop teaching tools and resources professionals will use with:
  - parents of children birth to 7
  - youth 8 to 13
- Use a collaborative process involving a multidisciplinary approach.

## Method

- An online survey (using Survey Monkey) was developed to assess professionals':
  - Knowledge of food marketing to children and youth,
  - Need for teaching tools and resources,
  - Preferences for training format, length, and delivery,
  - Comfort level in using technology.
- Electronic message sent to professionals inviting voluntary survey participation. Survey was also distributed through the state Extension Family Education Network listserv.

### Participants:

- 225 professionals, 218 completed surveys:
  - Extension nutrition education program – 25.6%
  - Public health/WIC – 18.1%
  - Youth development/4-H – 15.8%
  - Early childhood/family education, Head Start – 15.3%
  - Elementary education – 9.8%
  - Middle school/high school - 9.3%
  - Others including school & medical staff, after school care - 6.0%
- Primarily female, Caucasian, and well educated
- Wide distribution of ages

## Results

### Knowledge of Food Marketing to Children and Youth

Level of Knowledge	N (n=224)	Percent
Great amount of knowledge, including reading current research	27	12.1%
Some, only what I have viewed in media, read in newspaper, watched on TV	161	71.9%
Very little about food marketing to children and youth	27	12.1%
I don't know anything about food marketing to children and youth	9	4.0%

### Topics on Which More Information or Training is Needed

Topics	N (n=222)	Percent
Tools & resources to teach how food marketing influences food choices	182	82.0%
Current trends & issues in childhood nutrition & implications for communities	152	68.5%
Food marketing techniques & strategies to children	125	56.3%
Development stages as it relates to understanding marketing techniques & use of media in food marketing	124	55.9%

### Tools & Information Useful in Work

Useful in Work	N (n=218)	Percent
Having access to learning activities & lesson plans on food marketing to children & youth	179	78.0%
Learning "best practices" for teaching about food marketing to children & youth	154	70.6%
Having access to more current & credible information on food marketing to children & youth	134	61.5%
Improving my skills to teach adults & youth on the topic of food marketing to children & youth	117	53.7%
Networking with other professionals on the topic of food marketing to children & youth	69	31.7%

### Preferences for Tools and Technologies

- Tools for parents – fact sheets, videos, games
- Tools for youth – games, videos, displays, role plays
- Comfortable with downloading handouts, online reading, activities, webinars; less so with threaded discussions
- When online: blocks of 31-60 minutes (46.6%), 16-30 minutes (35.6%)
- Total course length: 2 – 4 hours (51.8%)
- Course availability: 2 – 3 months (65.6%)

## Discussion and Implications

- Clearly, survey findings indicate a need for and interest in professional development around greater understanding & knowledge of food/beverage marketing targeted to youth.
  - Only 12% of professionals indicated a great amount of knowledge.
  - Nearly 72% were using popular media as their source of information pointing to the need for research based information.
- Tools and resources ranked highest in desired training topics with all other topics over 55%.
- Results informed development of the training online.
- Results informed development of a training curriculum for professionals as well as curriculum to use with parents of children birth to 7 and youth ages 8 – 13.

## Program Design - Targeted Food Marketing to Youth

### Objectives - Participants will:

- Identify marketing techniques & strategies the food industry uses to market to children.
- Recognize trends in early childhood nutrition.
- Recognize developmental stages regarding children's comprehension & understanding of marketing & different media.
- Acquire strategies to help parents set limits for food & beverage choices in & out of the home.
- Utilize tools to teach parents & youth how food marketing influences food choices.



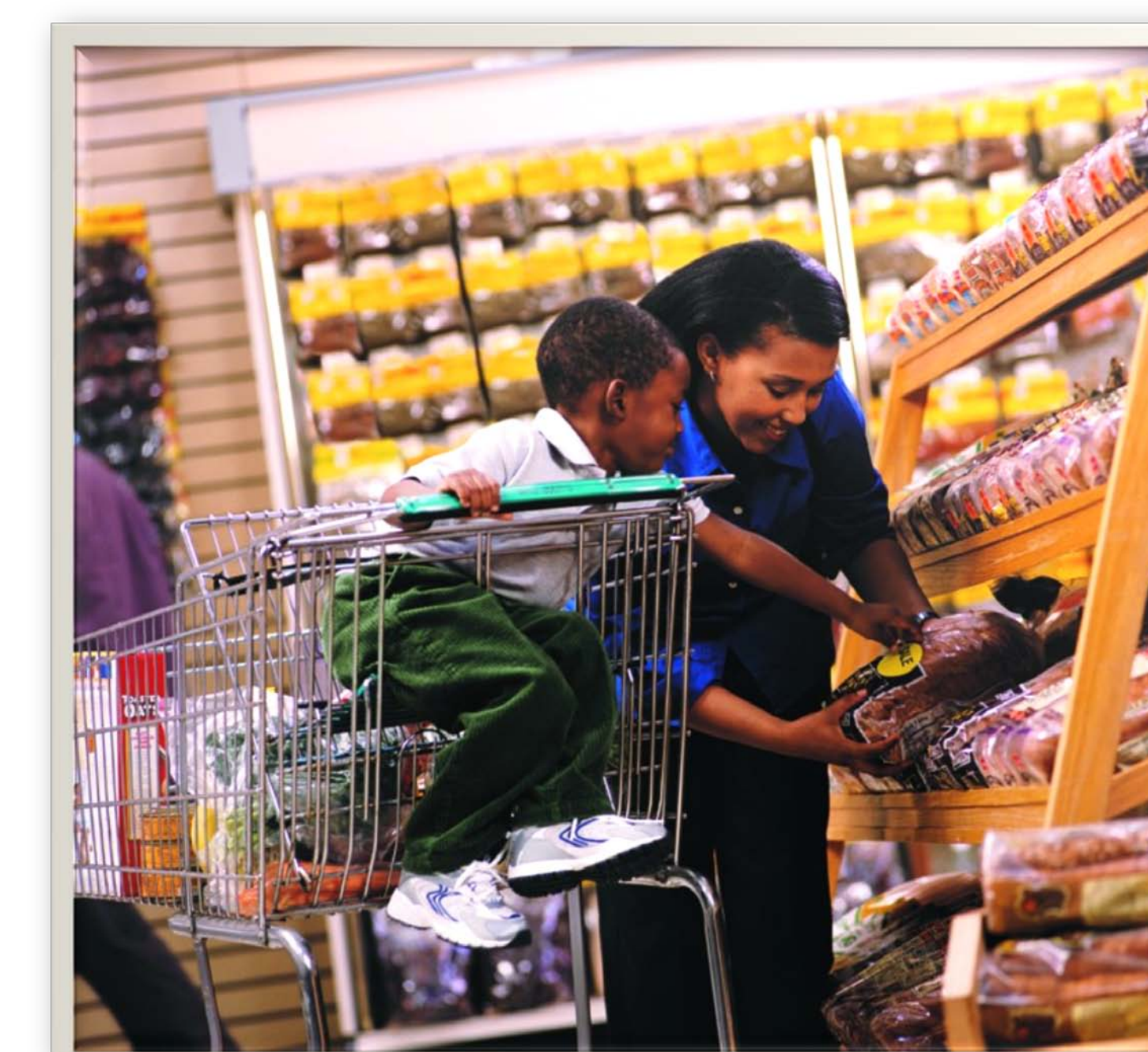
### Online Training Curriculum for Professionals

#### Professionals include:

- Early childhood professionals in Head Start, WIC/public health, family programs, child care, school & medical staff
- Youth workers including those in after school programs
- Extension nutrition education & youth development staff

#### Professionals work with:

- Parents of children birth to 7
- Youth ages 8- 13



### Curriculum Training Modules for Professionals

#### Content:

- Welcome and Course Introduction
- Child and Youth Development
- Food Marketing Techniques
- Nutrition and Physical Activity
- Parent and Family Strategies

#### Teaching resources & Completion

- Resources for Teaching Parents and Caregivers of Children Birth to 7
- Resources for Teaching Youth Ages 8-13
- Completing the Course

#### Pilot Evaluation

- The course is being piloted with 50 plus professionals in the targeted group.

**Food and beverage marketing to children in America represents, at best, a missed opportunity, and at worst, a direct threat to the health of the next generation.**

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