

Commercial Alert's Childhood Obesity Prevention Agenda For States, Municipalities and School Boards

American children are suffering from an epidemic of obesity. In spite of this, purveyors of junk food increasingly are able to use public schools as a platform for their marketing campaigns. In effect, the junk food lobby has latched onto the compulsory school laws as a way to corral a captive audience of impressionable children.

Parents should guide the eating habits of their kids. Corporations have no business wedging into that relationship. Schools should support parents in this.

We are what we eat, as the old saying goes; and in this the schools play an important part, for good or ill. Schools should encourage healthful eating habits and exercise. They should not become marketing zones and shopping centers in which junk food manufacturers get open access to impressionable children.

WE CALL ON STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN BY PROHIBITING THE MARKETING AND SALE OF JUNK FOOD IN SCHOOLS.

Schools should help parents promote good nutrition, rather than support junk food companies that promote products high in added sugar and fat.

1. States, municipalities and school boards should prohibit the marketing of junk food on school property.

- Prohibit contracts that obligate children to watch or listen to ads for junk food on school property. An example is Channel One, an in-school TV marketing program.
- Prohibit display of visual advertisements for junk food in school, such as billboards, signs, posters, and logo placements.
- Prohibit the use of corporate-sponsored curricula featuring or promoting junk food products.
- Prohibit exclusive marketing (“pouring rights”) contracts between soda beverage companies and school districts, school food service agencies and school groups.

Schools should make healthful food available to children.

2. States, municipalities and school boards should ban the sale or distribution of junk food on school property.

- Prohibit sale of junk food on school property, including, but not limited to, a la carte, before-school or after-school programs, concession stands or vending machines.
- Prohibit the distribution of junk food as a reward or prize for good behavior or exemplary performance.
- Prohibit distribution of free samples of junk food on school property.
- Amend Unfair and Deceptive Acts and Practices statutes and ordinances to prohibit marketing of junk food to children on school property.

Schools should be rewarded for exceeding federal nutrition standards.

3. States, municipalities and school boards should provide financial rewards to school districts, schools and food service agencies that exceed federal nutrition guidelines and obey restrictions on the sale of junk food in schools.

- School districts and school food service agencies should exceed the nutritional standards of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, especially by providing plenty of whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, fat-free dairy products, local and organic products, but no foods with hydrogenated vegetable shortening, and few or no fried foods.
- School districts and school food service agencies must strictly comply with the federal competitive foods rule.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have defined junk food as “foods which provide calories primarily through fats or added sugars and have minimal amounts of vitamins and minerals.”

For more information about the Childhood Obesity Prevention Agenda, contact Commercial Alert <<http://www.commercialalert.org>> at (503) 235-8012 or <info@commercialalert.org>.

Endorsers – Childhood Obesity Prevention Agenda (as of April 1, 2003)

Organizations

American College of Preventive Medicine
Center for a New American Dream
Center for Food and Justice
Center for Media Education
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Citizens Campaign for Commercial-Free Schools
Connecticut Public Health Association
Commercial Alert
Dads and Daughters
Eagle Forum
Green Party of the United States
Maryland Public Health Association
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Michigan Public Health Association
New Mexico Media Literacy Project
New Mexico Public Health Association
Obligation, Inc.
Organic Consumers Association
Science and Environmental Health Network
South End Community Health Center, Boston, MA
Washington State Pediatric Nutrition Practice Group
Yale Prevention Research Center

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Jason Catlett, President, Junkbusters Corporation
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Julie Mayfield, owner, NatJulie Great Products, Lacey, WA
Lila Murray, co-owner, White Mountain Foods
Gregor Robertson, President, Happy Planet Foods
Stonyfield Farms
TerrEssentials, Middletown, MD
Tumaro's Gourmet Tortillas and Snacks, Los Angeles, CA
Visionary Health Concepts Inc.