



**YALE RUDD CENTER**  
FOR FOOD POLICY & OBESITY

## **SCHOOL BUS ADVERTISING FACT SHEET**

### **WHY ADVERTISING ON SCHOOL BUSES IS BEING CONSIDERED**

Cash-strapped school districts around the country are selling ad space on both the interior and exterior of their school buses in order to raise money to support transportation costs and to fund school programs. Unless prohibited by state law or district policies, school districts have the authority to pursue the sale of advertising space on the buses, but many state legislators are nevertheless filing bills to support the practice.

### **WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS ABOUT SCHOOL BUS ADVERTISING?**

- Corporations spend billions of dollars each year to market their products to children, making the “commercialization of childhood”<sup>i</sup> a serious problem in our culture today.
- All manner of products are marketed, but foods and beverages ads are of particular concern, because about one-third of children in the US are either overweight or obese.<sup>ii</sup>
- Food and beverage companies predominately market high-calorie, low-nutrient foods, such as fast food and sugary drinks, to children and adolescents.<sup>iii</sup>
  - The companies use traditional media (e.g., TV and radio ads and product placements on TV shows), social and mobile media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and iPhone apps), and the Internet.<sup>iv</sup>
- In 2006, the food industry spent more than \$1.6 billion on marketing to youth, including \$900 million in marketing aimed directly at children younger than 12 years and designed specifically to increase positive attitudes and preferences for its products.<sup>v</sup>
- Exposure to food advertising has a negative impact on child and adolescent diets, which includes increases in snacking on unhealthy food,<sup>vi</sup> increased consumption of soft drinks,<sup>vii</sup> lower fruit and vegetable consumption,<sup>viii</sup> and higher rates of obesity.<sup>ix</sup>

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- For states which do not currently permit the sale of advertising space on school buses for any product or purpose, consider policies to prohibit it.
- For those states and localities which already have policies in place allowing school bus advertising, consider amendments to prohibit the advertisement of any foods or beverages.

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- <sup>i</sup> Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood; [www.commercialfreechildhood.org](http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org)
- <sup>ii</sup> Ogden, C.L., Carroll, M.D., Curtin, L.R., Lamb, M.M., Flegal, K.M. (2010). Prevalence of high body mass index in US children and adolescents, 2007–2008. *JAMA*, 303.3, 242 – 249.
- <sup>iii</sup> Harris, J.L., Pomeranz, J.L., Lobstein, T., Brownell, K.D. (2009). A crisis in the marketplace: how food marketing contributes to childhood obesity and what can be done. *Annu Rev Public Health*, 30, 211 – 225; Institute of Medicine, Committee on Food Marketing and the Diets of Children and Youth. (2006). Food marketing to children and youth: Threat or opportunity? Washington, DC: National Academies Press; Powell, L.M., Schermbeck, R.M., Szczypka, G., Chaloupka, F.J., Braunschweig, C.L. (2011). Trends in the nutritional content of television food advertising seen by children in the United States. *Arch of Ped Adol Med*, 165.2, 1078 - 1086.
- <sup>iv</sup> Harris, J.L., Schwartz, M.B., Brownell, K.D. (2010). Fast Food F.A.C.T.S.: Evaluating Fast Food Nutrition and Marketing to Youth. New Haven, CT: Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity; Harris, J.L., Schwartz, M.B., Brownell, K.D. (2011). Sugary Drinks F.A.C.T.S.: Evaluating Sugary Drink Nutrition and Marketing to Youth. New Haven, CT: Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.
- <sup>v</sup> Federal Trade Commission. (2008). Marketing food to children and adolescents: a review of industry expenditures, activities, and self-regulation. A report to Congress. <http://www.ftc.gov/os/2008/07/P064504foodmktingreport.pdf>. Accessed November 8, 2011.
- <sup>vi</sup> Halford, J.C.G., Boyland, M.J., Hughes, G., Oliviera, L.P., Dovey, T.M. (2007). Beyond-brand effect of television (TV) food advertisements/commercials on caloric intake and food choice of 5-7-year-old children. *Appetite*, 49, 263 – 267; Halford, J.C.G., Gillespie, J., Brown, V., Pontin, E.E., Dovey, T.M. (2004). Effect of advertisements for foods on food consumption in children. *Appetite*, 42, 221 – 225; Harris, J.L., Bargh, J.A., Brownell, K.D. (2009). The direct effects of television food advertising on eating behavior. *Health Psychol*, 28, 404 – 413.
- <sup>vii</sup> Andreyeva, T., Kelly, I.R., Harris, J.L. (2011). Exposure to food advertising on television: Associations with children's fast food and soft drink consumption and obesity. *Econ Hum Biol*, 9.3, 221 - 233.
- <sup>viii</sup> Barr-Anderson, D.J., Larson, N.I., Nelson, M.C., Neumark-Sztainer, D., Story, M. (2009). Does television viewing predict dietary intake five years later in high school students and young adults? *Int J Behav Nutr Phy*, 6, 7.
- <sup>ix</sup> Chou, S.-Y., Rashad, I., Grossman, M. (2008). Fast-food restaurant advertising on television and its influence on childhood obesity. *J Law Econ*, 51, 599 – 618.

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January 2012