



SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION

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June 9, 2005

To Whomever it May Concern,

RE: Food Marketing to Kids Workshop – Comment, P034519

On behalf of the 4000 health education professionals who are members of the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE), we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the “Food Marketing to Kids Workshop – Comment, P034519”.

The Society for Public Health Education is a 501c3 organization founded in 1950 whose mission is to improve the health of all through education, research and advocacy. SOPHE comprises some 24 chapters serving 33 states, Western Canada and Northern Mexico. We commend the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for taking the lead in addressing food marketing influences that contribute to childhood and adult-onset obesity and the link between unhealthy eating and physical inactivity as contributors to this epidemic.

Over the last 20 years, obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in teens. Obesity increases the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other chronic diseases. While obesity is a complex, multi-factorial problem, over-consumption of soft drinks and snack foods combined with fewer opportunities for physical activity at school, home and at work significantly increases the risk of obesity.

The sale of low-nutrition foods in schools makes it difficult for parents to ensure that their children are eating well. This is especially problematic when children have diet-related illnesses, such as high cholesterol or diabetes.

Some schools sell low-nutrition foods and beverages to help bridge budget gaps. However, many schools have switched from selling soda and low nutritional value food to selling healthier foods and beverages and have maintained economic profitability.

SOPHE is encouraged by the Administration's actions to address childhood obesity. While attention is being given to marketing of food and beverages to children and educating children and parents about nutrition, this is simply not enough. Community-based approaches for reducing obesity is both warranted and has been proven effective.

SOPHE recommends that the Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health and Human Services also address the contribution of and need for behavioral interventions in order to reduce obesity among the US population and in particular among children at the July 14 and 15 workshop.

While the workshop will convene many important stakeholders, there is no mention or acknowledgment of the need to include experts from the disciplines of health education and public health. Without the contribution of knowledge from these professions, this workshop is missing the mark in its goal of reducing childhood obesity. SOPHE is available to offer assistance in identifying speakers with relevant expertise in behavioral-based interventions and research that have been proven to reduce obesity among children.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

M. Elaine Auld, MPH, CHES
Executive Director