

I. INTRODUCTION

California youth, like their peers across the country, continue to face a serious nutrition and physical activity crisis. For the first time in two centuries, the current generation of children in America may have shorter life expectancies than their parents due to the rapid rise in childhood obesity.¹

An increase in type 2 diabetes among children has paralleled the rising rates of obesity.² One in three children born in 2000 and half of all children of color are expected to develop type 2 diabetes during their lifetime.³ Despite these statistics, food and beverage marketing geared to children and youth overwhelmingly promote unhealthy foods and beverages.

Due to increased public concern over the obesity epidemic and the role that marketing plays in establishing eating patterns, a growing number of health advocates are calling for restrictions on advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and youth.

The recent Institute of Medicine report, *Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity*, billed as the most comprehensive review to date of the scientific studies, concludes that food and beverage marketing influences the diets and health prospects of children and youth. The report calls for sweeping changes in the way the food industry markets its products to children. Even Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's *10-point Vision for a Healthy California* calls for marketing only healthy foods and beverages to children 12-years-old and under.

Health advocates like California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition), a program of the California Department of Health Services and Public Health Institute, believe that schools should serve as a safe haven from unhealthy food and beverage messages. Since 1987, California Project LEAN has worked with California school districts to develop and implement policies that support healthy eating and physical activity. While considerable strides have been made to provide California students with healthy foods and beverages that are convenient, appealing and affordable, the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages still exists on school campuses.

The *Captive Kids: Selling Obesity to Schools* tool kit addresses the issue of marketing unhealthy foods and beverages on California school campuses. While geared toward California health advocates, this tool kit may also be useful to health advocates outside of California. *Captive Kids* includes information on:

- marketing to children and youth through schools;
- key steps to develop policy that addresses marketing at schools;
- answers to legal questions; and
- talking points, case studies, fact sheets, additional resources and more.

Facts

Growth in new food products targeted to kids has been huge, from 52 in 1994 to nearly 500 introduced last year. Eighty to 97 percent of the food products aimed at children and teenagers are of "poor nutritional quality."⁴



Studies suggest that food advertising and marketing is associated with more favorable attitudes, preferences, and behaviors among children toward the advertised food product.⁵

The food industry spends an estimated \$10 billion per year marketing foods and beverages to children and youth in America.⁶



Studies have shown that labeling and signage on school campuses have an effect on students' food selections at school.⁷