

**HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH
2010 RAPID-RESPONSE ROUND 3 GRANTS**

Awards to six sites in 2010-2011, totaling \$750,000
Program Director: Mary Story, PhD, RD

SUMMARY

Program Purpose:

Healthy Eating Research is a national program that supports research on environmental and policy strategies to promote healthy eating among children to prevent childhood obesity, especially among lower-income and racial and ethnic populations at highest risk for obesity.

Exploring Ways to Strengthen the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to Improve Nutrition for Low-Income Children

Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress, Washington, DC
Principal Investigator: Susan Blumenthal, MD, MPA

The objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive survey of stakeholder groups to identify barriers and opportunities for improving nutrition in the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The survey will be designed with input from key informant interviews and distributed to over 500 key stakeholders involved with SNAP and other food assistance and obesity prevention programs. SNAP currently serves over 41 million Americans per month living at or below 130% of the poverty level, approximately half of whom are children and adolescents, and thus this project will focus on lower-income children and adolescents 18 years of age or younger who receive SNAP benefits. Ultimately, these survey responses will be synthesized to identify promising incentives, approaches and regulations to inform policy recommendations to improve nutrition in SNAP.

Evaluating the Impact of Using Financial Incentives to Build Supermarkets in High-Need Areas

New York University School of Medicine, New York, NY
Principal Investigator: Brian Elbel, PhD, MPH
Co-Principal Investigator: Tod Mijanovich, PhD

The use of tax credits and other incentives is an increasingly looked-to approach to change food environments. Policies are being considered across the U.S. This project will evaluate the impact of New York City's use of tax and zoning incentives to encourage the building of supermarkets in the highest need areas of the city. This natural experiment will be evaluated using a difference-in-difference study design. Parent intercept surveys (n=800) will be conducted before the new supermarket is introduced in: (a) the community in the Bronx where the new supermarket is to be built, and (b) a comparison community. After the supermarket is built, these parents will also complete a follow-up telephone survey. Overall, the study will assess changes

in children's fruit, vegetable and snack consumption, and parents' shopping patterns. The long-term goal of this project is to help inform other cities and states as they implement their own programs to introduce supermarkets in high need areas.

Investigating whether Menu-Labeling Laws Lead California Restaurants to Modify the Nutritional Contents of their Offerings

RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA
Principal Investigator: Roland Sturm, PhD

The implementation of a new California law on January 1, 2011, will require chain restaurants to label calories on menus. This study will test the hypothesis that restaurants subject to a calorie labeling law are more likely to improve the caloric and nutritional content of menu items, compared to restaurants not subject to the law. The study aims to: 1) describe the current food environment in restaurants, including how restaurant characteristics and state/local policies are associated with menu nutrition, and 2) evaluate changes in calorie levels of restaurant menus between 2010 and 2011 – that is, before and after full implementation of the California law. The study will compare a treatment group (chain restaurants subject to the law – that is, with 20 or more locations in California) with a control group (chain restaurants not subject to the law). It will compare self-reported caloric and nutritional data for standard menus that are made available by restaurants on their websites or upon request, between spring 2010 and spring 2011; baseline data were previously collected. Overall, this study will help to provide policy-makers with a better understanding of the full effects of regulatory disclosure policies on public health.

Assessing the Impact of Two California County Ordinances Banning Toys or Other Incentives with Unhealthy Menu Items for Kids

Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, CA
Principal Investigator: Abby King, PhD

The advertising and marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages via cross-promotions and premiums, such as toys and other incentives, may contribute to the development of unhealthy eating patterns and obesity, particularly in children. Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties (Calif.) passed separate ordinances on May 21, 2010 and November 9, 2010, respectively, preventing restaurants from offering toys or other incentive items to children in conjunction with unhealthy food and beverage choices. Timely evaluation of the impact of these policies is critical as other localities consider adopting similar policies. Therefore, the aims of this study are to: 1) capture relevant menu changes following policy implementation, including menu modifications/reformulations, price changes, and marketing variations; 2) study the impacts of the ordinances on specific food and beverage choices and parent perception and behavior regarding menu choices for their children; and 3) document each County's efforts to implement and enforce the ordinance and explore media response. This study will utilize a quasi-experimental, parallel-group based matched design to compare pre-post effects on 8 Santa Clara County fast food restaurants and a pre-post design in San Francisco County to compare 19 McDonald's and 11 Burger King restaurants before and after the ordinance goes into effect. Data sources will include restaurant and menu audits, parent point-of-purchase surveys, restaurant environment observations, content analysis of media coverage, and County monitoring of implementation and enforcement.

Analyzing the Impact on the Jobs Market of Implementing a Tax on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL
Principal Investigator: Lisa Powell, PhD

A number of states and cities are considering the imposition of a sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) tax aimed at reducing consumption and raising tax revenue to fund anti-obesity programs. The major research question that will be addressed by this study is: What is the net employment impact of reductions in SSB consumption that would result from significant SSB taxes? This study will assist policy-makers by providing independent and more comprehensive evidence on the net employment effects of SSB taxes that correctly takes into consideration not only the reductions in SSB beverage consumption as claimed by industry, but also the job gains due to the alternative consumption of non-taxed beverages and the offsetting increase in employment from the jobs generated by the new tax revenues. This project will use the structural input-output Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) model, which contains a large array of econometrically estimated parameters of the economy that will be used to simulate the implementation of SSB taxes on employment. Analyses will be undertaken for the U.S. as a whole and regionally for two states (California and Illinois) and two cities (New York City and Philadelphia). Researchers hypothesize that spending on alternative beverages and government spending associated with the tax revenue will offset job losses associated with the reduced consumption of SSBs.

Evaluating the Impact of Mandatory Menu Labeling on the Nutritional Quality of Restaurant Offerings

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
Principal Investigator: Lisa Harnack, DrPH, MPH, RD

The U.S. Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (health care reform law) includes a national requirement for calorie labeling at chain restaurants with 20 or more locations. Development and implementation of regulations related to this new policy are expected to occur within the next one to two years, and studies evaluating the public health effects of this policy need to be developed and initiated rapidly. In preparation for conducting a quasi-experimental study to examine the influence of mandatory point-of-purchase calorie labeling on the nutritional quality of restaurant menu offerings, the purpose of this study is to analyze baseline (pre-mandatory labeling) trends in the calorie content of restaurant menu offerings at 10 leading fast food restaurant chains over 14 years (1997-2010). A data set that includes nutrient composition information will be assembled using current and archived versions of the University of Minnesota Nutrition Coordinating Center (NCC) Food and Nutrient Database. In this database, menu items available at each of the restaurants and their nutrient composition have been updated every other year on an alternating schedule, thus allowing for examination of marketplace trends over an extended period. Trends in calorie content, nutrients and food groups believed to be linked with energy balance (e.g. fiber, added sugars, vegetable servings, etc.) will be examined in this study.