

What's In Store for Us?™

Tips for Effective Healthy Food Access Messaging

- ✓ Focus on BOTH the health AND economic benefits of access to healthy food for kids, families, and neighborhoods.
- ✓ Be prepared to address the high cost of food, the need for consumer education around healthy eating, and the concern that just because the food is available doesn't mean that people will buy it.
- ✓ Reference healthy food financing success stories like Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative began in 2004 and has made it easier for an estimated 500,000 residents to find healthier food in their communities. It led to the financing of 88 healthy food stores or farmers' markets in underserved rural or urban locations, and created or retained some 5,000 jobs in struggling neighborhoods.
- ✓ Stress the local angle: access to healthy food and more job opportunities for people living in the neighborhood.

Healthy Food Access Messages (*Use key messages consistently and repeatedly)

- ★ Nearly 30 million people in neighborhoods across America have little or no access to healthy food like fruits and vegetables. These same neighborhoods often struggle with high rates of unemployment and diet-related chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease.
 - Healthy food financing programs can help. These programs can help local grocers to open, expand, and improve grocery stores and corner stores in neighborhoods that need food and jobs the most.
 - Without access to healthy food, a nutritious diet and good health is out of reach. Healthy food financing programs are good for health because they offer an opportunity for kids and families to establish healthier lifestyles.
- Every neighborhood should have access to a place where people can buy fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats like chicken and turkey, and dairy and whole grain products like milk, yogurt, whole grain breads, and pastas. Research shows that this will contribute to better eating habits and good health, including decreased risk for diet-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease.
- Healthy food financing programs are good for the economy. They create jobs for people living in the neighborhood, create markets for farmers, and have the potential to lower health care costs.
- Providing access to healthy, affordable food is one part of the solution. In addition, we must make sure consumers are educated and stores promote and market the healthy items.

Language to Emphasize/Language to Avoid

Messages that resonate best are clear and simple. They use everyday language free of jargon and communicate shared values and emotion. Below you'll find a list of words/phrases Voices for Healthy Kids encourages you to use (left-hand column) when talking about food access. Language in the right-hand column includes terms and phrases not as easily understood or impactful when looking to engage your audience.

Use This Language	Instead of This Language
✓ Areas without access to healthy food like fruits and vegetables, lean meats, whole grains, and dairy	✗ Food desert
✓ Neighborhood, town, city, school, church, family, local business	✗ General "community" which means something different to each person
✓ Underserved	✗ Poor
✓ Helping children grow up at a healthy weight	✗ Preventing childhood obesity
✓ Eating healthy and being physically active helps prevent diabetes and heart disease	✗ Eating healthy and being physically active helps prevent childhood obesity

Tips for Effective Messaging to Support Public Policy Change

- 1 Connect with supporters.**

When communicating to gain support for policy, systems, and environmental changes that help kids grow up at a healthy weight, it is important to use language that will move people to take action. By framing your message in a way that paints a picture of how the current environment makes it difficult, if not impossible, to make healthy choices, you can create a sense of urgency and the need to take action. Make sure to clarify that the change and action you're calling for is about transforming environments to make it easy for people to eat healthy and be physically active and less about creating personal behavior change.
- 2 Use the right words.**

While obesity is a chronic disease, most people still think of it as a personal problem with a personal solution. They believe if someone is obese or overweight, that person just needs to eat less and be more physically active. They don't immediately see the need for public policy solutions. However, when talking about people facing obesity-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease, most people agree that we need to work together to find a solution to the problem. Avoid using "obesity" and instead emphasize the health threats posed by heart disease and/or diabetes.
- 3 Emphasize choice.**

People are most supportive of healthy changes if they don't fear their choices will be limited. When talking about adding healthy options, stress the array of overall choices offered to people, especially parents who we are here to support, so the focus is not on the removal of unhealthy options.
- 4 Use the right messenger.**

Messages are only as strong as the person delivering them. Is the person delivering the message credible? Are they representative of the community most affected? Do they have personal experience related to the issue? Are they respected by the audience? The best messenger needs to be determined for each situation and location. For example, when messaging on health issues, the best messenger could be a doctor, a nurse, or a patient. Make informed decisions about the most culturally appropriate messenger on an issue.
- 5 Stress consumer education as ONE piece of the puzzle.**

People believe education is the best way to encourage behavior change. But helping all children grow up at a healthy weight is a complex challenge and education is only one part of the solution. Reinforce consumer education as key to awareness building about the problem and solutions, but emphasize other initiatives that drive system-wide policy change. For example, with tobacco use, warning labels did a great deal to educate consumers but the change in norms and dramatic drops in smoking rates happened when environmental changes happened like prohibiting the sale to minors and making workplaces smoke-free.
- 6 Alleviate skepticism and build trust.**

People are very skeptical of government and framing our solutions only from that lens can prevent us from getting our message through to key audiences. Introduce policy, systems, and environmental change efforts to the public with words like "services," "resources," "partnerships," as people are more inclined to embrace this terminology instead of "regulations," "mandates," "bans," "funding," and "government."