Factors that influence teens’ eating and physical activity behaviors:

Findings from telephone focus groups

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Presenter Disclosures

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(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose
Learning Objectives

• Identify environmental factors that influence adolescents’ eating and activity behaviors

• Compare how these behaviors differ by urban, suburban, and rural locations

• Discuss ways to customize interventions to address barriers reported by teens
Prevalence of Obesity Among U.S. Children and Adolescents (Aged 2–19 Years)

Source: CDC.gov
Bridging the Gap is …

• A collaborative effort to assess the impacts of policies, programs & other environmental factors on a variety of adolescent health-related behaviors

• An RWJF initiative begun in 1997 with focus on adolescent alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use and related outcomes

• More recently expanded to include youth eating practices, physical activity, and weight outcomes

• Linked to the ongoing, NIDA-funded, *Monitoring the Future* study
Focus Group Objectives

• Identify the size of the community where teens go to eat and exercise

• Understand youths’ eating and exercising behaviors and factors that influence these behaviors
  • Explore the types of foods and beverages that teens consume
  • Explore the types of activities that teens do for fun and/or for physical activity

• Understand differences in behaviors by age, gender and geography
Methods

- Computer-assisted Telephone Focus Groups
  - Kahle Research Solutions Inc.
  - Up to 90 minutes in length

- 12 focus groups with 5-10 participants each
  - Nationwide recruitment thru e-billboards, emails and purchased lists (rural)
  - Selection criteria
    - 13-18 years old
    - English-speaking
    - Attend public school
  - Stratification
    - Male/female
    - Urban/suburban/rural
    - Younger/older

- Parental consent for those younger than 18; written consent forms emailed
# Commonly Mentioned Sources of Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Dinner</th>
<th>Snacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Many</strong></td>
<td>• Home</td>
<td>• School</td>
<td>• Home</td>
<td>• Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• None (skip breakfast)</td>
<td>• Home</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Movie theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Convenience store/gas station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Some</strong></td>
<td>• School</td>
<td>• Fast food restaurant</td>
<td>• Fast food restaurant</td>
<td>• Fast food restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fast casual restaurant</td>
<td>• Fast casual restaurant</td>
<td>• Mall food court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• General store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School vending machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Few</strong></td>
<td>• Convenience store</td>
<td>• None (skip lunch)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Coffee shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fast casual restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ice cream shop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Themes

• Rural and urban teens are more likely to get snacks at convenience stores and gas stations than suburban teens
• Urban and suburban teens are more likely to eat dinner out of the house than rural teens
• Teens with open campuses are more likely to eat lunch at fast food restaurants or coffee shops than teens with closed campuses
• Younger teens are more likely to skip breakfast than older teens
Factors Influencing Food Choices

Most Common: Time

• “I don't usually have time to eat breakfast at home in the mornings, and when my bus gets to school it’s too late, so I don't eat breakfast.”
  – Female, 13-15, urban group

• “If I’m in a rush between classes, I’ll go to a vending machine and get like a granola bar, bag of chips.”
  – Male, 16-18, urban group
Factors Influencing Food Choices

Most Common: Convenience

• “Sometimes I'll grab like a Pop Tart or a bagel or something and take it with me, or I might stop at the vending machine before I go to class.”
  – Female, 16-18, urban group

• “I eat school lunch most of the time. Sometimes we'll go over to the gas station across the street.”
  – Female, 16-18, rural group
Factors Influencing Food Choices

Somewhat Common: Money and Social

- “I don't usually eat lunch because I'm too busy hanging out with friends and things like that and plus I rarely have money to eat lunch.”
  - Male, 13-15, suburban group

- “Usually I don't really have money to buy anything, so I just kind of eat what my friends have, like if they share with me. I usually just hang out there.”
  - Female 13-15, rural group
Factors Influencing Food Choices

Least Common: Taste and Nutritional (Mis)information

• “I don't really like to eat at school. The food is just nasty. I'll usually have fries or bread.”
  – Female, 16-18, urban group

• “I guess whatever they have healthy to choose, like pizza or a hot dog.”
  – Male, 16-18, urban group
CDC and IOM Recommendations to Improve Nutrition

• Improve availability and affordability of healthier food and beverage choices in public service venues
• Restrict availability of less healthy foods in public service venues
• Incentivize food retailers to offer healthier food and beverage choices in underserved areas
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Many</strong></td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Some</strong></td>
<td>School sport</td>
<td>Commercial gym</td>
<td>School sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School facility</td>
<td>School sport</td>
<td>Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial gym</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighborhood (walking/running/biking)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Few</strong></td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>PE class</td>
<td>School facility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Themes

• Urban and suburban teens are more likely than rural teens to have access to parks
• Suburban teens are more likely than urban and rural teens to have access to school physical activity facilities regardless of participation on a team
• Rural teens are more likely than urban and suburban teens to utilize facilities that are far away
• Males are more likely than females to engage in spontaneous or unstructured physical activity (e.g. pick-up games)
Factors Influencing Physical Activity

Most Common: Convenience

• “I would love a park or some kind of field where I can play football in, instead of having to drive like two miles.”
  – Male, 16-18, urban group

• “I'm 12 miles away from my school. If I want to go to a park, I have to go between 8 to 22 miles.”
  – Male, 13-15, rural group

• Moderator: How far is close by and how far would it be when you wouldn’t go?
  Respondent: If it was a half hour or an hour away.
  – Female, 13-15, rural group.
Factors Influencing Physical Activity

Somewhat Common: Price

- “I would be on the dance team, but it’s really expensive.”
  – Female, 16-18, urban group

- “I used to [go to a health club], but then it got pretty expensive so we quit.”
  – Female, 13-15, rural group
Factors Influencing Physical Activity

Least Common: Safety

• “The closest park to my house is probably about 10 minutes away, but it’s pretty run down so I just usually don’t go to it. Then there’s this really nice park about 15 minutes away that I go to with some of my friends sometimes...It’s pretty new, so there’s not a lot of vandalism there. The other one, the closer one just isn’t taken care of at all and the other one is.”
  – Female, 13-15, rural group
From the mouths of babes...

• “The more I think about it, the more I think about the days where I've said, you know, let's get a bunch of guys together and go play basketball, and then I've realized I can't just walk outside my door and find a hoop. So I really do think that [environment] has some impact.”

  – Male, 16-18, rural group
CDC and IOM Recommendations to Increase Physical Activity

• Require physical education in schools and increase the amount of physical activity in PE programs in schools (CDC)
• Increase opportunities for extra curricular physical activity
• Improve access to outdoor recreational facilities
For more information:

www.impacteen.org

www.yesresearch.org

www.bridgingthegapresearch.org