

# **Childhood Overweight & Hunger: Co-existing Problems, Co-existing Solutions**

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# Presentation Overview

- About California Food Policy Advocates.
- Time of opportunity.
- The co-existence of hunger and obesity.
- Review several policy opportunities.
- Likely challenges.
- Hear from you.

# About CFPA

- 10-year-old advocacy organization.
- Mission: to meet nutritional needs of low-income Californians.
- San Francisco, Los Angeles, Fresno, San Jose offices.
- Local, state and federal policy.
- Technical assistance.

# Time of Opportunity

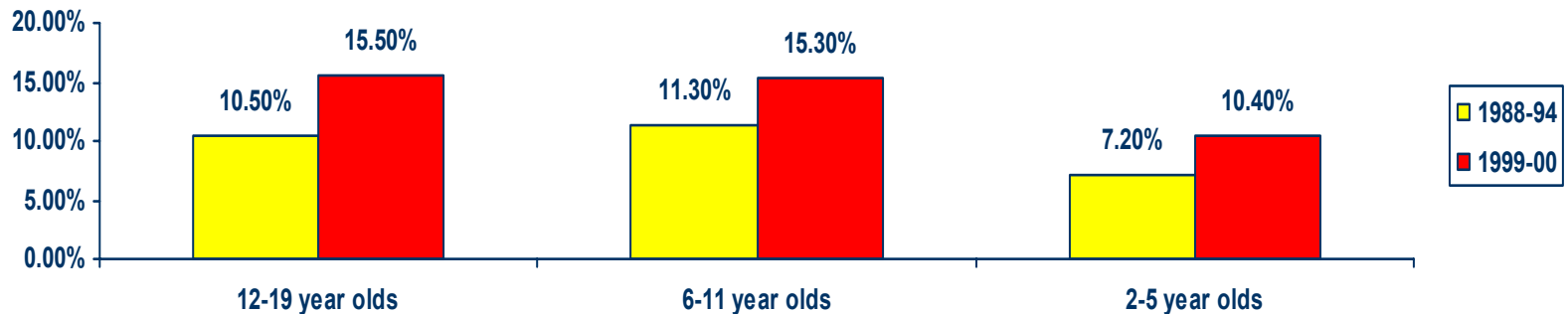
- Epidemics of overweight and obesity are still news.
- Can use attention to obesity/overweight to focus on full scope of nutritional problems.
- Anti-hunger infrastructure, such as the federal food programs, can play a role in preventing and addressing obesity/overweight.

# Time of Challenge

- Overweight/obesity getting worse.
- Continuing bad economy means hunger and food insecurity will become more severe.
- Both advocacy efforts face same challenge: we risk sliding back to an era when personal responsibility—be it in the form of “just eat less” (obesity) or “just donate more” (hunger)—is seen as the only needed step.

# Reviewing the Facts

## NHANES Data on Childhood Overweight



# Reviewing the Facts

## Childhood Overweight Data from CCPHA

- CCPHA has focused attention on the overweight and fitness rates for school children.
- One in four students in California is overweight.
- Problem throughout the state, with an especially strong concentration in the Los Angeles area.

# Reviewing the Facts

## Hunger in California

- The California Health Interview Survey conducted by UCLA examined hunger and food insecurity rates.
- Adults with children have higher rates of food insecurity than those without.
- Over 2 million low-income adults food insecure. 1.1 million live in households with children.
- Nearly one-third of food insecure are hungry.

# Reviewing the Facts

## USDA Data on Food Insecurity

- 1998 USDA study found that nearly 20% of American children experience food insecurity.
- The USDA also found that 5.1 million Californians experience food insecurity (includes all incomes and all ages).

# How Obesity and Hunger Co-Exist

Hunger/Food  
Insecurity

Obesity/  
Overweight

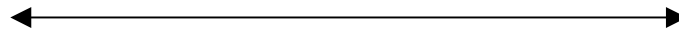


- Obesity and hunger/food insecurity are sometimes thought of as being on opposite ends of the same spectrum.
- Eat too much = overweight. Eat too little = hungry.
- But that's not how the real world works.
- This perspective clouds the fact that the problems can and do co-exist.

# How Obesity and Hunger Co-Exist

Nutritional  
Problems

Nutritional  
Health



- The same person can experience obesity/overweight and food insecurity/hunger.
- How much you eat, what you eat—over time.
- For example, \$73 food stamp allocation runs out. Rely on cheapest, most filling, most convenient food.
- We need to look at a person's *overall* nutritional health.

# Nutritional Health

- Do people consistently have access to the quantity and quality of food they need?

# Food Buying Reality

- Several studies have found that the diets of low-income families tend to be especially high in fat and low in fruits, vegetables and dairy products.
- If you don't live near a market selling produce, you can't buy it.

# Our Challenge

- How can existing policies designed to alleviate hunger also help address obesity?
- How can new policies to prevent overweight/obesity also help alleviate hunger?

# Part of the Solution: Federal Food Programs

- Federal food programs reach millions of children and adults and bring in millions of dollars.
- CA receives \$761 million for National School Lunch Program. 2.1 million daily participants in FRP.
- Federal entitlement money (especially important during state budget crisis).

# Improving the Fed. Food Programs

## Child Nutrition Reauthorization

- About twice every decade, Congress must reauthorize the child nutrition programs.
- Time to examine budgets and program requirements.
- Coalition of state and national groups engaged.

# The School Environment

## Prime Location to Prevent Obesity & Hunger

- Several of the Federal Food Programs are school-based.
- 72% of 9-11 year olds report eating at least one school meal a week.
- Yet children face barriers to selecting healthful meals such as competitive foods, stigma and time.
- Less than 40% of NSP also receive SBP.

# Using School Programs to Address Obesity & Hunger

- Goal is to increase participation in school meals (addressing hunger), while assuring high-quality meals to students (addressing overweight).

# One Aspect of CNR: USDA Regulatory Authority

- Limitations of current USDA standards.
- Results for kids: an unhealthy school environment.
- One in six California elementary school kids reports access to soda machines.
- One in four reports school sells name-brand fast foods (which can include healthier options.)

# Policy Recommendations

- Strategy: extend USDA authority to regulate the nutritional value of school foods to the entire school campus for the full day.
- Create a nutritionally healthy school environment.
- Eliminate stigma of participation.

# Other CNR Activities

- Stefan's update on WIC.
- Other programs to watch: CCAFP, Summer Food.

# Federal Opportunity #2

## IMPACT legislation

- Sponsored by Senate Leader Bill Frist, MD
- Includes a wide range of provisions to promote healthy nutrition and increase physical activity.
- Provisions to provide local funding to child care centers, community-based organizations and others to plan and implement nutrition programs.

# IMPACT Legislation

## A Solution to Both Obesity & Hunger

- As with USDA authority opportunity, we are seeking to improve the environment in which children and parents make food choices.
- Will it move forward?

# Local Efforts

- Unclear what federal activity can happen.
- At the local level, real change can and is happening quickly.
- Also creating momentum for statewide and national action.
- Follow successful tobacco model: national dialogue on tobacco policy buttressed by local action.

# Local Efforts

- Los Angeles and Oakland soda ban.
- Lead the way for other districts.
- Fresno Hunger and Nutrition Forums.

# Likely Challenges to Joint Obesity/Hunger Solutions

- Misconceptions about hunger/obesity.
- Money.
- Attention.

## Misconception 1: Obesity/hunger seen as opposites Isn't obesity our main nutritional problem?

- FACT: Obesity and hunger are *both* serious problems.
- 5.1 million Californians experience food insecurity. We haven't eliminated hunger as a cause of disease, disability or limited opportunity.

**Misconception 2: Food programs seen as  
unneded.**

**Don't school lunches make kids fat?**

- **FACT:** The school lunch program is improving childhood nutrition, while alleviating hunger.
- Participants consume more of key vitamins and minerals, less sugar and soda and more vegetables and milk than non-participants. Lots of nutrition bang for calorie buck.
- Improvements being made in fat content.

# Remember...

- Framing obesity and hunger as opposites can have unintended consequences (or negative intended ones).
- Similar to pitting fitness vs. diet as the only needed solution.
- We still can (and should) seek to improve programs.

# Money

- State budget crisis. Ideas for no-cost or cost-saving solutions?
- Federal budget distractions.
- Good news: one solution to two problems.
- Need groundswell to make a budgetary priority.

# Attention

- Will Bill Frist fulfill the role of prevention leader?
- Will Californians be on the right committees?
- How can we keep up the media's interest?

# Questions for You

- What have been your experiences with clients and programs that address both hunger/food insecurity and obesity?
- What policy solutions would be most helpful?