

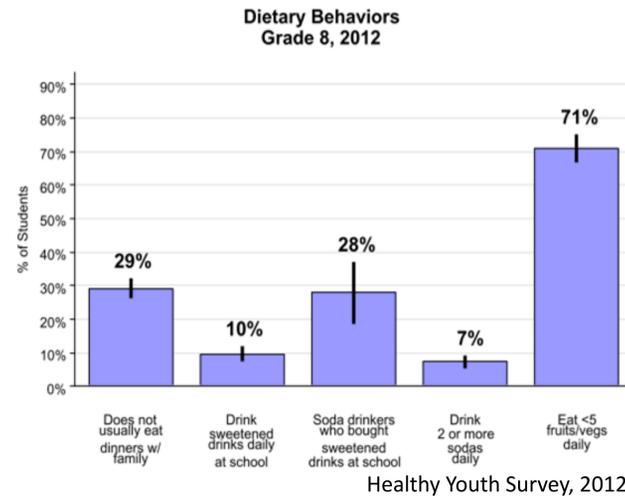
# Restaurant Kids' Meals: Feasibility Study & Policy Options

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## Introduction & Background

- Kids eat almost a fifth of their meals away from home, and the nutritional quality of those meals is important. Diet quality can impact cognitive development, weight maintenance, and risk of chronic disease later in life.
- On a typical day, 1/3 of kids eat or drink at a quick-service restaurant, and 12% at a full service restaurant.
- Eating at restaurants is associated with increased sugar-sweetened beverage, total fat, saturated fat, and sugar consumption. It is also associated with decreased milk consumption.
- Less than 10% of kids' meals meet criteria of various nutrition standards.

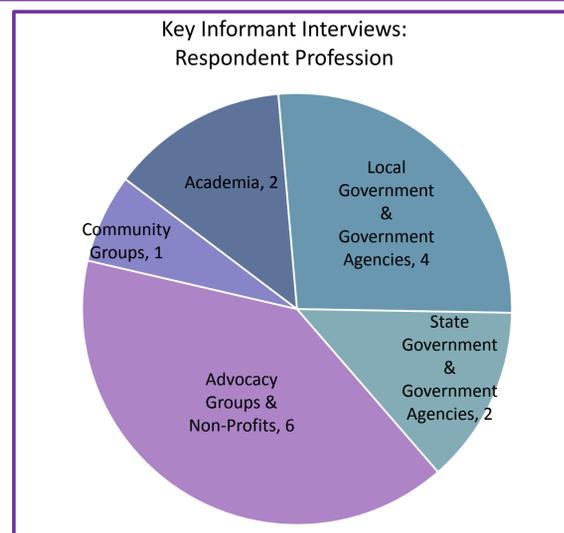


## Purpose

- The purpose of this project was to provide foundational information for a kids' meal policy, including considerations for business & legality, input from experts, and policy recommendations, with the ultimate goal of making the healthy choice the easy choice for parents and children at restaurants in King County.
- This project aimed to address three key questions:
  - What is the problem?
  - Why does it matter?
  - What can we do about it?

## Methods

- **Literature review** was conducted. Areas of interest included nutritional quality of restaurant kids meals, evaluation tools, food marketing, status of existing policies, potential economic effects.
- **Policy analysis** was conducted, looking at model policies, as well as kids meals policies that have passed, are in process, or have failed. Analysis focused on type of program or policy, program/ policy approach, and implementation strategies.
- **Key informant interviews** were conducted with 15 individuals. A breakdown of who was interviewed can be found in the results section. Questions were designed to identify and understand lessons learned, political and economic feasibility, unintended consequences, and overall approach.
- **Restaurant Assessment** was conducted at four sites in South King County and Seattle, but it was not the focus of this project.



## Acknowledgements

- Thank you to the Healthy Eating & Active living team within the Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Section at Public Health—Seattle & King County, especially my preceptor, Celeste Schoenthaler, MPH.



## Key Informant Interview Themes

Stakeholder Engagement:	
<b>Support</b>	Parents, healthcare professionals, teachers, community & advocacy groups can create noise and demand for a kids' meals policy.
<b>Opposition</b>	Restaurants, business, industry and others can create noise and lodge arguments against a kids' meal policy.
<b>Engagement</b>	Helps policymakers to understand attitudes of constituents regarding a potential policy, and can help policymakers make a decision based on wants of the folks they represent.
Unintended Consequences:	
<b>Equity</b>	Higher prices could lead to poorer purchasing power elsewhere, larger portion of income spent on food for low income families and other purchasers of kids' meals such as the elderly.
<b>Discontinuation of kids' meals</b>	No kids' meal could mean kids' order full adult meal, which has implications for nutritional content of foods, could also mean folks spend more when buying childrens' meals.
Messaging & Framing Strategies:	
<b>Framing</b>	Creating a messaging strategy for stakeholders, policymakers, and the media will allow policy developers to promote an accurate representation of the policy, and avoid inflammatory or inaccurate language.
<b>Business Considerations</b>	Creating a specific strategy for communicating with business and restaurants will address key issues such as economics, demand, wastage, and profitability.
<b>Long-Strategy</b>	A kids' meal policy could fit into a longer healthy restaurant environment, beverage tax, or other strategy.

## Notable Quotes

We're not taking away choice, we're actually providing more choice because right now, there isn't as much of a choice to get healthier food.

At the national level it's tough to say what approach we should take and where we should go. We don't have enough incidences that we've regulated them so we don't know what the impact will truly be.

Make it easy to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Maybe what we should do, what I would love to regulate, is to have restaurants make the healthy option a fun one too.

The biggest thing is the bottom line, show them that there is popular support, parents would welcome it, and go to that restaurant *because* there is a healthier option.

Make sure this is the right balance of language that will be passable, powerful and meaningful.

## Policy Options

Policy Option	Description
<b>Toy Ordinance</b>	Meals offered with an incentive must adhere to nutrition standards. Nutrition standards include requirements for total calories, fat, sodium, sugar, food groups (fruit, vegetable, whole grain, low-fat dairy, lean protein).
<b>Healthy Default Beverage</b>	Only healthy beverages (low- or non-fat milk, 100% juice, and water) can be offered with a kids' meal. Other beverages are offered at standard prices.
<b>Healthy Default Side</b>	Nutrition standards for the side item that automatically comes with the meal.
<b>Whole Meal Nutrition Standards</b>	Nutrition standards (as noted in Toy Ordinance description).
<b>Combination, or Multiphase Policy</b>	Combination of two of the above approaches (such as healthy default side and beverage). Or a series of policy that is pursued over time, beginning with strategies that are easier to implement, like a voluntary program, and ending with whole meal nutrition standards.

## Next Steps

- Key Stakeholder Feedback, from parents, restaurants, and others, or by proxy
- Create Messaging & Framing Strategy
- Engage Implementing Division
- Gauge Political Feasibility