

Healthy Food Retail Working Group

About the Healthy Food Retail Working Group

The Healthy Food Retail (HFR) Working Group is a team of researchers and leaders working on healthy food retail related issues and who are committed to improving the health of children and their families through improved research, evaluation, and dissemination of healthy food retail strategies. The working group is a collaborative effort of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Healthy Eating Research (HER) program and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN).

Membership in the working group is open to all with an interest in obesity and nutrition in the food retail setting, including research focused on shifting consumer purchases toward healthier foods and beverages that align with the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) and to increase demand for these options. The primary population of interest is children, ages 0 to 18, and their families, especially in lower-income and racial and ethnic populations at highest risk for obesity. Settings of focus include a variety of retail outlets, e.g., supercenters/big box stores, supermarkets, grocery stores, corner stores, bodegas/tiendas, convenience stores, farmers' markets, dollar stores, drug stores, restaurants, and online food shopping. The working group is also interested in the role of retail food sources in relationship to other aspects and levels of the food system (e.g., wholesalers, manufacturers).

Working Group Mission

The mission of the HFR Working Group is to build a network of researchers and leaders from academia, non-profit organizations, government, and other funding agencies focused on increasing the quantity and quality of research in the area of childhood obesity and nutrition in the food retail setting to:

- Influence purchases by children and their families toward healthier foods and beverages that align with the DGA by increasing demand for these options;
- Improve access to healthier foods and beverages by working directly with retailers; and
- Facilitate the development and implementation of evidence-informed policies.

Special emphasis is placed on equity and addressing the needs of those at highest risk for obesity, especially lower-income and racial/ethnic populations.

Working Group Goals

Overall Goal: To identify the most effective strategies to shift consumers away from purchasing and consuming unhealthy, energy-dense foods and beverages, and instead toward purchasing and consuming healthier foods and beverages that align with the DGA, by designing, conducting, and disseminating research in the food retail setting on how to increase access to and demand for healthier options.

Longer-Term Goals:

1. Develop a HFR research agenda to facilitate desirable changes in the food retail environment to improve the availability, accessibility, appeal, affordability, image of, and demand for healthy products
2. Generate interest in HFR research by documenting and making the case for its relevance to overall obesity and related chronic disease prevention and control efforts
3. Build evidence to support changes to HFR policies, environments, and practices

4. Increase funding for HFR research
5. Increase the number and capabilities of HFR researchers
6. Increase the amount and quality of HFR research
7. Affect change in national, state, local, and tribal policies to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages purchased by children and their families
8. Increase access to and sharing of measurement tools and surveillance data/systems through (e.g., web-based platforms, NCCOR's Catalogue of Surveillance Systems - <http://tools.nccor.org/css>)

Meeting Frequency and Format:

Full working group meetings will consist of a joint speaker series held every 1-2 months. The topics for the speaker series will be decided by the two working group leaders and the leaders of each of the three subgroups (Methods, Retailers, and Policy). All working group members are encouraged to join these meetings.

After each speaker, there will be a group discussion to determine if further steps need to be taken on the speaker topic. Subgroups will meet at the discretion of the subgroup leaders to delve deeper into topics discussed at the joint speaker series, or on other topics determined by the subgroup. Subgroups may select projects or products to pursue, including papers for publication, grants to write, and/or research to conduct. **If you are interested in learning more about current projects of any of the subgroups – please contact the subgroup leaders listed below.**

HFR Working Group Leaders

- Shannon Zenk (szenk@uic.edu), PhD, MPH, RN, Professor, College of Nursing, University of Illinois at Chicago
- Joel Gittelsohn (jgittel1@jhu.edu), PhD, MS, Professor, Global Obesity Prevention Center, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

HFR Subgroups and Leaders:

1. Methods for Assessing the Retail Food Setting
 - Leaders: Lindsey Smith-Taillie (taillie@unc.edu), PhD, Research Assistant Professor, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and Lucia Leone (lucialeo@buffalo.edu), PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Buffalo School of Public Health and Health Professions
2. Working with Retailers and Reaching Consumers
 - Leaders: Barbara Baquero (bbaquero@uw.edu), PhD, MPH, Associate Professor, University of Washington School of Public Health and Betsy Anderson Steeves (eander24@utk.edu), PhD, MS, Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee Knoxville
3. Identifying Policies to Support Healthier Consumer Purchasing Patterns
 - Leaders: Elizabeth Racine (efracine@uncc.edu), DrPH, RD, Associate Professor, University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Sheila Fleischhacker (sheilafly9@gmail.com), PhD, JD, Adjunct Professor, Georgetown School of Law

For more information, please contact:

Kirsten Arm, MPH, RDN
Research Analyst, Healthy Eating Research
kirsten.arm@duke.edu