

## **Formative Assessment of Availability of Healthy Snacks and Beverages in Stores near Schools in a Rural Oregon County**

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PRESENTATION FORMAT: 15 minute oral presentation

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: persons interested in child nutrition and/or the food environment

### **ABSTRACT:**

**Background:** Rural children are at greater risk for obesity than their urban counterparts. Differences in healthy food access may contribute to this disparity. We conducted a formative assessment to increase availability of healthy snacks and beverages in food stores near schools in rural Oregon. Findings will be used to identify strategies to implement as part of a larger research project to improve snacking behavior among children living in rural areas.

**Methods:** We assessed availability of healthy snacks and beverages in food stores (n=15) using the SNACZ checklist and conducted in-depth interviews with food store owners (n=6). Frequency distributions were computed for SNACZ checklist items and interview data were analyzed using applied thematic analysis.

**Results:** Overall, availability of healthy snacks and beverages in study communities was low. Four interrelated themes regarding store owner perspectives on stocking healthy snacks and beverages emerged from the interviews: customer demand, space constraints, vendor influence, and perishability.

**Conclusion:** Efforts to increase availability of healthy snacks and beverages in rural food stores should engage youth and vendors as stakeholders for identifying strategies to increase demand for and availability of these items. Further research is needed to determine strategies that are feasible to implement in the study communities.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** Describe the availability of healthy snacks and beverages in food stores near schools in a rural Oregon county.

Describe factors that influence store owner decisions around stocking snack foods and beverages in stores near schools.

Describe factors to consider in identifying strategies to increase availability of healthy snacks and beverages in food stores near rural Oregon schools.

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