



Communication Plan

for

California Project LEAN
Food on the Run Campaign
California Department of Health Services
Public Health Institute
Funded by
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Social Marketing Plan
California Project LEAN *Food on the Run* Campaign

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This plan recommends communication objectives and strategies for the *Food on the Run* campaign, as well as programmatic suggestions. The plan was written with Project LEAN's existing delivery mechanisms, past successes, and program resources in mind, and incorporates ideas for state and community-level implementation and partnership activities.

I. Situation Analysis

Background

California Project LEAN, a program of the California Department of Health Services, strives to increase the accessibility and visibility of healthful foods and physical activity options in communities across the State by working with 10 regional networks, industry, voluntary organizations and the media.

Nationwide, diet and physical activity patterns have resulted in crisis proportions of overweight and obese adolescents, and have placed these youth at risk for chronic illnesses such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and some cancers. A snapshot of American youth reveals that, for example:

- Obesity now affects one in five children in the United States.¹
- Only about one percent of youth are meeting all the national recommendations for food group intake, with 30 percent meeting the recommendations for fruit, grain, meat, and dairy intake and 36 percent meeting recommendations for vegetable consumption.²
- Almost half of young people ages 12-21 are not physically active on a regular basis.³

Adolescents from all ethnic groups have some dietary deficiencies, but minority groups, females and teens from low socioeconomic backgrounds are at a higher risk for chronic disease. To address these issues, Project LEAN created *Food on the Run*, a campaign designed to reach low income, multi-ethnic high school youth and their families as a way to build an environment to improve health and reduce the risk of major chronic diseases.

Food on the Run applied an audience segmentation strategy based on the Diffusion of Innovations model in targeting early adopters, those adolescents who serve as opinion leaders and informal leaders for their peers.⁴ This segmentation strategy has been used successfully by commercial marketers of many different products. It allows the marketer to, in addition to reaching the early adopters themselves, utilize the early adopter's interpersonal communication networks to diffuse ideas and behaviors to a wider audience (targeting early adopters allows a marketer to potentially reach 83% of the teen audience—early adopters, early majority, and late majority).

Competing Behaviors and Barriers

The challenges in promoting healthy eating and physical activity to adolescent opinion leaders include:

- **Media and peer influences.** Adolescents are inundated with advertisements for foods that are high in fat, sugar, and salt, and are influenced to some extent by what their friends eat and do with their free time. In addition, adolescents cited the use of television and other media (e.g., video games and movies) as contributing to a lack of motivation to be physically active.⁵
- **Behavior modeling by parents.** Despite their growing independence, adolescents are still influenced by the actions of their parents. If their parents do not purchase/eat/prepare healthy foods and engage in physical activity, adolescents are less likely themselves to engage in these behaviors.⁵

