



*Network for a Healthy California Retail Program—
Building Upon and Contributing to the Evidence*

Food stores are the final decision point where consumers spend CalFresh (formerly known as food stamps) dollars. A widely held marketing “rule” supported by independent academic studies, is that a majority of purchasing decisions are made in the store.^{i,ii} As a result, billions of dollars are spent annually on in-store advertising aiming to influence consumer choice, but few retailers try to generate consumer demand by promoting or merchandising healthy eating to lower-income shoppers.

The White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity (2010) recognizes, “...marketing of food products can also be a powerful tool to drive the purchase of healthy products and to communicate important information about healthy eating choices.”ⁱⁱⁱ The *Retail Program* establishes formal partnerships with retailers who agree to use its signage, recipe cards, in-store radio spots, and host promotional activities such as food demonstrations and store tours to encourage shoppers to choose more fruits and vegetables. The *Retail Program* complements the *Network’s Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention (CX³)*, and its Fruit and Vegetable Marketing Guide assists small and medium stores in low-income communities to improve fresh produce quality, variety, and promotion.

The *Retail Program* is building upon and adding to the evidence of how retail interventions can contribute to chronic disease and obesity prevention.

- **Retail Intervention Study:** In 2011, to evaluate the *Network’s* in-store promotions 15 grocery stores located in low-income neighborhoods were assigned to one of three categories: Food Demonstration and Merchandising Materials, Merchandising Materials Only, or Control stores receiving no *Retail Program* activity. Shopper surveys were conducted with 1,000 English- or Spanish-speaking female shoppers to assess shopper awareness of *Network* materials, beliefs, and self-efficacy regarding fresh produce. Shoppers at stores with both cooking demonstrations and merchandising materials were more likely to purchase one of the promoted fresh produce items than shoppers at control stores. Cooking demonstrations also appeared to be associated with greater shopper awareness of merchandising materials.^{iv}
- **Retailer Satisfaction Study:** In 2009, a survey was conducted with over 60 participating retailers to explore their satisfaction with the *Retail Program*, solicit their suggestions for new materials and improvements, and aid in gauging its effectiveness. A majority responded they had agreed to join the program to “promote a healthy community”.^v Almost two thirds said their sales increased when *Retail Program* promotional activities were being conducted; 62 percent were “extremely satisfied with promotional activity that took place at their store.”

- **CX³ Food Availability and Marketing Store Survey:** The *Network* developed a store survey for the CX³ project that showed high reliability for questions about fruit and vegetable availability, quality, and price, and other healthy foods inside the stores. These resident-conducted retail food store surveys are used to foster development of local strategies for program planning, nutrition education, and community participation.
- **Healthy Choices at Checkout Pilot Evaluation:** As part of the *San Diego Nutrition Network's* All-Star Snacks pilot begun in 2010, retailers were encouraged to display nutrient dense snack items in the checkout stand priced at \$1.00 or less. The pilot evaluation concluded that displaying healthier snack items at checkout can increase consumer choice without affecting a retailer's profits. Customers purchased the healthier items when they were made available, and the profit margin on these snacks was the same as traditional items.^{vi}
- **Messaging at Checkout Study:** The *Retail Program* has an on-going interest in finding innovative, low-cost ways to influence shopper behaviors. In partnership with Catalina Marketing, the program is currently pilot testing if coupon-like color fruit and vegetable promotional messages and recipes that accompany the sales receipt will increase CalFresh shoppers produce purchases.

*"We see the need to promote fruit and vegetable consumption for better health; especially in the children so that they chose better options instead of candy."
"We do need to bring awareness to our people and we are happy to partner in this effort; it is important."*

**Jorge Escobar, Store Owner
La Tapatia**

"Everything in the program is set up to be easy. Customers pick up the recipes, talk to the food demonstrator, and really get more involved in shopping for healthy food. I would recommend it for other retailers as well because it's just helping get the message out to more communities that their families do truly need to introduce more fruits and vegetables into their meals."

**Teresa Blanco, Wellness Program
Manager, Northgate Gonzalez Markets**

ⁱ Platt SK. Revisiting the 70 Percent Rule: Evaluating consumer in-store decision-making and the transformational impact of digital signage. Featured article. Signage Solutions online. <http://www.signagesolutionsmag.com/article/by-the-way-revisiting-the-70-percent-rule-2755>

ⁱⁱ Inman JJ, Ferraro R, Winer RS. (2004) Where the Rubber Meets the Road: A Model of In-Store Consumer Decision-Making. Marketing Science Institute Report. Volume: 98. Cambridge, MA.

ⁱⁱⁱ White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity (2010). Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity within a Generation –Report to the President. Washington, D.C.

^{iv} Smith & Lehmann Consulting (2011) *Network for a Healthy California* Large Store Intervention Study: Shopper Intercept Survey. Prepared for the Public Health Institute. Oakland, CA.

^v Health Research Consulting Group. Loma Linda University School of Public Health. 2009 Retailer Satisfaction Survey. *Network for a Healthy California*. Sacramento, CA.

^{vi} Ramirez, AG. Healthier Choices at Checkout Stands Sell in San Diego. (2012) Neighborhood Marketing Association.