



CFBAI's Category-Specific Uniform Nutrition Criteria

CHILDREN'S FOOD & BEVERAGE ADVERTISING INITIATIVE • JUNE 2013

Introduction. This fact sheet summarizes the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative's (CFBAI) goals, the reasons why the CFBAI adopted uniform nutrition criteria that go into effect on December 31, 2013, the differences between the new criteria and nutrition criteria currently used, and the advantages of the new criteria.

About the CFBAI. Since 2006 the CFBAI has worked with leading consumer packaged goods companies and quick serve restaurants to use advertising primarily directed to children under 12 years old ("child-directed" advertising) to help promote healthier dietary choices and healthy lifestyles among American children.¹ All of the participants use meaningful, science-based nutrition criteria to govern their child-directed advertising or agree not to engage in child-directed advertising. Currently, the CFBAI's 17 participants represent the majority of child-directed food advertising on television. More information CFBAI is available at <http://www.bbb.org/us/CFBAI>.

About the CFBAI's category-specific uniform nutrition criteria. The CFBAI issued [uniform nutrition criteria](#) in July 2011 that go into effect on December 31, 2013. These criteria essentially will replace currently used company-specific nutrition criteria for child-directed advertising.² The new criteria also will be reviewed periodically, such as when the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans are issued. If necessary and appropriate, they will be updated during those reviews.

Why did the CFBAI adopt uniform nutrition criteria? Although the participants' existing criteria were working well to improve foods in child-directed advertising, the participants recognized that uniform nutrition criteria would have additional advantages. For example, these uniform nutrition criteria are responsive to recommendations from the First Lady and the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, the Federal Trade Commission, and others that CFBAI use uniform criteria. Accordingly, after a CFBAI task force of nutrition professionals conducted a more than year-long comprehensive review of nutrition science and government and third-party dietary recommendations, the CFBAI participants adopted category-specific uniform nutrition criteria.

Why are the criteria category-specific? The CFBAI's criteria are organized around 10 categories. This approach reflects the inherent nutritional differences among various food types (e.g., dairy and grain products) and amounts of foods (e.g., individual items, main dishes, and meals) and their role in the diet.

How do the new nutrition criteria differ from those currently used by the CFBAI's participants? They differ in two key ways. One set of changes provides comprehensive nutrition criteria for all 10 categories. The other set of changes eliminates ways that foods may qualify for child-directed advertising. These are explained below.

First, for all categories the new criteria include the following:

- Calorie limits;
- Nutrients to limit (NTL) criteria for saturated fat, *trans* fat, sodium, and total sugars; and
- Nutrition components to encourage (NCTE) (food groups and/or nutrients) requirements.

CFBAI Participants



Currently, not every participant has a standard for calories, NTL and NCTE, so the new criteria fill those gaps.

Second, under the new criteria, participants will not be able to qualify a food based solely on:

- A “reduced” claim (e.g., 25% less sodium); or
- Portion controlled, 100 calorie packaging.

What advantages do the new criteria have over the current, company-specific criteria?

There are three primary advantages.

First, the criteria are uniform. Now the same types of foods, regardless of the manufacturer, will have to meet the same criteria. For example, all cereals will have to meet the criteria for grain products, regardless of which company makes the cereal. Additionally, there is greater consistency in how the requirements are set and applied. For example, a limit on the number of grams of total sugars replaces eight different ways sugars limits are expressed now.

Second, the new criteria are stronger than the current standards. For example, in 2011, when the new uniform criteria were announced, many of the kids’ yogurts that already were meeting meaningful nutrition standards under participants’ current commitments did not meet the new criteria because they were “too sugary.” The same was true of some cereals. Similarly, in 2011 many canned pastas and other lunch/dinner items, already meeting meaningful standards, did not meet the new criteria because they were “too salty.” To continue advertising these foods to children in 2014, the companies will have to change the recipes so they contain less sugar or salt to meet the new uniform nutrition criteria. The recipes for other foods also will need to be changed to meet the new criteria if the participants wish to advertise them to children in 2014.

Third, the criteria are even more transparent and easier to understand and apply than the current standards. Although the criteria are primarily intended to be used by the participants to determine whether a product may qualify for child-directed advertising and operate in the background, the CFBAI wanted the criteria to be as transparent and user-friendly as possible. Because these criteria are tied to the labeled serving size and other information that is generally found on a Nutrition Facts Panel and label, they simplify compliance monitoring for the CFBAI and others. Their user-friendly nature also may help other companies in the U.S. improve the foods they advertise to children.

When will the new criteria be implemented? Because the new criteria represent challenging-yet-realistic goals, the CFBAI participants agreed to implement them on a rigorous timeline — December 31, 2013.

Will the new CFBAI nutrition criteria change what is advertised to children? Yes! In 2011 some foods already met the new criteria, but many did not. Overall, the new criteria impose significant challenges on the participants, and require recipe changes if the participants wish to continue advertising certain foods to children after these criteria go into effect. As a result, the new criteria will bring about even more improvements in foods advertised to children.

¹ The CFBAI’s focus is on child-directed advertising in children’s programming that is designed to be appealing to and persuasive to children, and not on all ads children may see, such as ads on prime time dramas or reality shows where children are a small percentage of the audience.

² After the implementation date participants will be able to use their own criteria only if they are at least as rigorous as the CFBAI’s criteria.