

# CASE STUDY

## Using a community health assessment to understand the food environment of a rural locality



### BACKGROUND

Your professor has asked your class to lead a community health assessment in a rural community near your university to gather information on healthy and unhealthy food marketing to children in grocery and corner stores. You have identified stakeholders in the community that are willing to participate in this assessment and have completed a thorough review of available secondary data on this topic from existing literature and databases. However, you have not been able to locate any data from the county you are working in to assess healthy and unhealthy food marketing practices. You are charged with finding a survey or other tool to help collect this last and vital piece of information.

### CONSIDERATIONS

You need to consider how you would like to collect information on food marketing practices in the community you are assessing—from children or parents directly, from local businesses, and/or from observations of local media. Depending on your answer, you will need to think about ease of use for the tool and its appropriateness based on age. Additionally, it will need to be a tool that can easily be used in variety of grocery or corner store settings.

### MEASURE SELECTION

In class, your professor shares a helpful resource—[NCCOR's Measures Registry](#)—for identifying measures with validity and reliability information. You decide to focus on an environmental tool since there is no data available on healthy and unhealthy food marketing practices. You determine that an observational tool will be the best option for providing a comprehensive baseline data set. To begin your search for an

appropriate measure, you select the “Food Environment” domain from the Measures Registry filter option. Since you have decided to focus on an observational tool, you select “Environmental Observation” and further narrow this selection by choosing “Small Town/Rural.” After reviewing the remaining 19 matches, you explore the [Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention \(CX3\) Food Availability and Marketing Survey](#). This environmental tool has been shown reliable in a previous study<sup>1</sup> and includes instructions on instrument use. The “At a Glance” tab for this measure provides further details on the measure. The instrument was pilot-tested by six local health departments in low-income neighborhoods that ranged from dense urban to rural and that the store survey was designed to be implemented by groups of varying abilities, including youth or community members. Lastly, you review the variables and see that marketing/advertising/promotion is included. You decide to use these measures to assess healthy and unhealthy food marketing practices.

Do you want more practice using the Measures Registry? Try using this same case study with different search parameters to find measures that evaluate food marketing using a child and/or parent survey.

**This case study was contributed by Dr. Alisha Farris, an assistant professor at Appalachian State University. The study outlines a class assignment in Dr. Farris' Community Nutrition course. If you are a student or professor who has used NCCOR's tools or resources and would like to be featured in a future case study, let us know at [nccor@fhi360.org](mailto:nccor@fhi360.org)!**

#### References

1. Ghirardelli A, Quinn V, Sugerman S. Reliability of a Retail Food Store Survey and Development of an Accompanying Retail Scoring System to Communicate Survey Findings and Identify Vendors for Healthful Food and Marketing Initiatives. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*. 2011;43(4):S104-S112.