

Michele Polacsek Ph.D., M.H.S., professor of public health and director of the Center for Excellence in Public Health (CEPH), presented a poster, together with College of Medicine (COM) student Summer Moukalled, on reducing digital food and beverage marketing to students on Monday, November 7th in Boston MA. at the American Public Health Association's 150th annual meeting. The poster was titled: Reducing Student Exposure to Digital Food and Beverage Marketing

Digital marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to students is pervasive and undermines healthy eating. Expanded use of electronic devices and remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increased rates of childhood obesity and exacerbated pre-existing disparities. Given the lack of federal protections, state and local policy interventions to limit digital food marketing in schools and on school-issued devices are needed.

Four areas for potential practice and policy intervention were identified and policy language for use by state and local education authorities were developed.

Recommendations included:

Content Filtering

- Include food-related content as a content filter category on school networks and school-issued devices
- Utilize ad-blocking technology on school networks and school-issued devices
- Prohibit food-related apps on school-issued devices

Digital Instructional Materials

- Do not use digital materials with food and beverage marketing or recommend their use by students
- Minimize the collection of student data by digital materials

Communication with Parents & Students

- Communicate school-related and student activity-related information to parents and students on school-dedicated platforms

Student-Owned Device Use

- Expand student owned device use policies to prohibit use during lunch