



On September 28th, the White House convened the first National Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health since 1969. The event featured keynote speeches by President Biden and Chef José Andrés, panel discussions that brought together leaders from the public and private sectors, and exciting opportunities for advocates to discuss the work they are doing around the country.

Now, three weeks after the Conference, what's next? What actions have been taken as a result of this historic event? And what changes can we expect to see in the future?

To answer these questions, the Rudd Center is taking a deeper look at the Biden-Harris Administration's National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health – a plan that was released in conjunction with the Conference. Based on the strategic goals outlined in the plan and the important discussions that occurred at the Conference, we've selected some action items that our researchers believe will be particularly important for government officials to address in the coming months:

Action #1 – Healthy School Meals for All

Throughout the Conference, calls for advancing a pathway to free, healthy school meals for all often received the loudest applause from attendees, particularly when Connecticut Representative Rosa DeLauro called this action a “moral imperative.”

At the Rudd Center, we've published over two dozen studies on school nutrition, and the research is clear: school meals provide one of our nation's most powerful tools to reduce food insecurity and support student nutrition. Recently, Rudd Director Dr. Marlene Schwartz joined a [national team](#) of researchers to [review](#) the benefits of providing healthy school meals for all, and identify [strategies](#) to increase consumption. Hopefully, with the support of the federal government, states around the country can continue to move towards universal free school meals.



Action #2 – Develop a Front-of-Package Labeling System



Front-of-package (FOP) labels play a significant role in how consumers perceive an item's nutritional value, but they can often be misleading, confusing, or deceptive. In their National Strategy, the Biden-Harris Administration outlined their plans to address this concern by developing a new FOP labeling system to clearly communicate nutrition information. Additionally, the FDA proposed a new standard of “healthy” that food products must meet if they want to be labeled as such.

The Rudd Center has conducted several studies focused on FOP labels and the influence they have on consumer perceptions and behaviors – most recently, a [study](#) on FOP claims and labels on sugar-sweetened drinks marketed as appropriate for children. Based on this work, we believe that developing a standardized FOP labeling system will assist consumers in making informed decisions about the foods they purchase.

Action #3 – Address Marketing of Unhealthy Foods and Beverages to Youth

Over \$14 billion is spent every year by food, beverage, and restaurant companies on marketing in the U.S. [Our research](#) shows that over 80% of this advertising promotes fast food, sugary drinks, candy, and unhealthy snacks that are high in sodium, added sugars, and/or saturated fat. Furthermore, much of this advertising is aimed at children, and companies often target Black and Hispanic youth with unhealthy food and drink ads at disproportionately high rates.



To inform their recommendations in this area, the National Strategy references the Rudd Center’s research on this topic, including our [2021 FACTS Report](#). As part of this strategy, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) will pursue targeted law enforcement actions to prevent deceptive advertising of foods and dietary supplements, including deceptive advertising that might be targeted to youth.

Action # 4 - Expand SNAP



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a proven intervention to address food insecurity. Many of the most promising of the temporary Covid-19 federal food assistance program expansions, such as providing Summer-EBT to more students and extending SNAP benefits to college students by waiving the work requirement, could be made permanent. A recent [Health Affairs Policy Brief](#) co-authored by Rudd Director of Food Security Initiatives Dr. Caitlin Caspi explored the full range of Covid-19 federal food assistance program expansions and flexibilities.

The National Strategy calls SNAP’s college student eligibility restrictions, “out of date” and lays out a plan for USDA and the Department of Education to conduct joint outreach to inform Pell Grant recipients and others of their potential eligibility for SNAP benefits. The National strategy also recommends the expansion of Summer-EBT so more children can access nourishing meals when school is not in session.

Of course, these four actions represent only a fraction of the work that still needs to be done to address many of the hunger, nutrition, and health challenges that are facing our country. As President Biden said during his opening remarks, “There is nothing beyond our capacity when we work together.”

