

Date: 02/17/2019

Heather Haynsen  
COMSTRAT 565  
Case Study #1

# California's Champions for Change

## BACKGROUND

The American obesity epidemic is not new. However, general “efforts to educate people about the health risks of a poor diet do not seem to be working,” and Americans now suffer from obesity and other health issues more than in previous decades (Richtel & Jacobs). From 2008 to 2016, obesity in American adults rose from 33.7% to “nearly 40 percent”, a worrying trend (Ibid).

However, these diet-related health concerns do not hit all Americans equally. Low-income households tend to choose low-cost, energy-dense foods and often lack “kitchen facilities, cooking skills, money or time” required for healthy eating (Drewnowski & Eichelsdoerfer). A low cost nutritious diet is possible, but meals are often “low in palatability and variety, may require dramatic shifts in eating habits and may be time intensive to prepare,” making them inaccessible without additional resources and/or lifestyle change (Ibid).

To make matters worse, healthy eating alone cannot change obesity. Physical activity is the second key component needed to combat health concerns. An estimated 77% of American adults fail to meet national physical activity guidelines (Ducharme). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics did not segment the population into income levels, though they noted that employed people saw higher physical activity numbers than unemployed, and that those “working in managerial or ‘professional’ positions were more likely than individuals in production roles... to meet the standards” (Ibid.). It may be inferred that low-income individuals participate in less physical activity than their higher income counterparts.

California designed their Champions for Change marketing campaign to combat these exact issues. Champions for Change social marketing campaign was designed to “promote fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and food security” to low-income families (SNAP-Ed Toolkit). The marketing campaign is part of a joint venture between the California Department of Public Health, California's Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Branch, and the federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

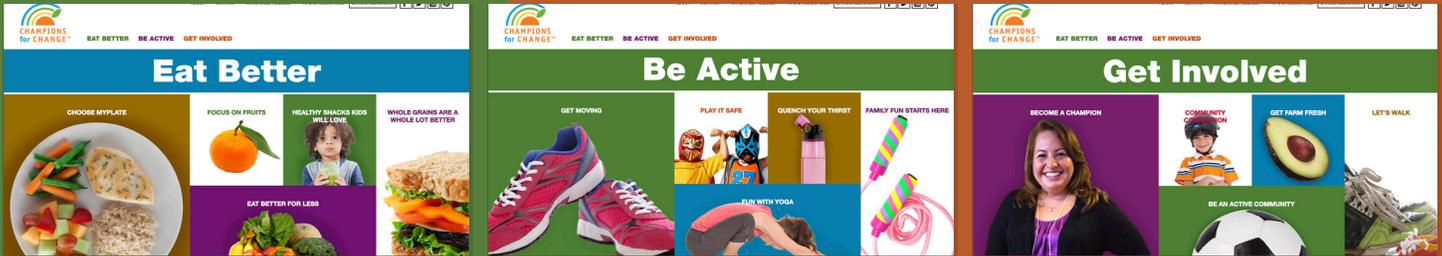


Screenshot (RS-E)

## TARGET AUDIENCE

The Champions for Change prosocial campaign targets its website and marketing materials to “low-income mothers” in California, especially those of Hispanic or Latino descent (SNAP-Ed Toolkit). This audience was selected due to the disproportionate need of low-income families to implement healthy eating and physical activity changes, and “because mothers play a key role in their families' health” (Ibid.). Therefore, low-income mothers are at the forefront of the obesity epidemic in California.





Screenshots (Champions for Change)

## FORMATIVE RESEARCH

California's Champions for Change "is a recreation of the former California 5 a Day Campaign," originally designed in 1997 for the same purpose (SNAP-Ed Toolkit). This rich history of prosocial marketing allows recent marketing campaigns to build off the successes and avoid the failures of previous years. While there is no published formative research, the campaign can pull from over 20 years of market testing to craft their campaigns. As the Champions for Change YouTube page was created in March of 2017, it can be inferred that marketing managers understand modern social media practices as strive to meet them as able.

## CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

Champions for Change asks three things of their target audience: Eat Better, Be Active, and Get Involved (Champions for Change). Based on background research, eating better and being active are the two components needed to combat obesity, and becoming involved a movement can make it easier to participate.

The campaign website is divided into those three headings, with detailed information and outbound links available for curious visitors. For example, the "Be Active" website section has features on "Play it Safe" for kids, "Fun with Yoga," a "How Much Activity?" guide, and a video on simple exercises. These small pieces of information are easy to dip into and out of without getting overwhelmed, or could lead to more research were a viewer so inclined.

The entire website is also available in Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Hmong. This inclusiveness helps ensure that low-income families across

California have the same opportunities to fight obesity.

In 2017, Champions for Change ran a "Be Better" campaign that combined these three messages through "television, radio, billboard, public transit, and digital advertisements" (Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention). The current Champions for Change website is a product of the Be Better campaign, created in conjunction with the Runyon Saltzman Agency (RS-E).

On the "CA Champions for Change" social media pages, every single post is simple and stays on one of these three messages. However, the vast majority of social media posts are in English. One Valentine's Day post asks: "Need help planning for Valentine's day? Surprise your sweetie with these heart-healthy dishes." This 'Eat Better' post features an appetizing photo, straightforward text, and a link to SNAP-Ed's Valentine's Day menu (also available in Spanish). These three messages are crafted to work together across all media channels to help families fight obesity.



Screenshot from Facebook



Screenshots (RS-E)

## PROJECT EVALUATION

Statewide evaluations of Champions for Change go back for years, the oldest of which currently available online are from 2013. Interviews were “conducted with a female caretaker and one of her children” and indicated that 38% “demonstrated unaided ad recall” (SNAP-Ed Toolkit). This study also showed that based on self-reported behaviors, “campaign exposure was not related to changes in fruit and vegetable consumption” or levels of physical activity (Ibid.) While these results seem disheartening, the campaign continued.

The most recent year for which evaluation data exists is 2017, during which the “Be Better” campaign launched and ran for 26 weeks. Of the “low-income Latina, African-American, and White mothers randomly sampled” for evaluation in English and Spanish, unaided recall jumped to “an unprecedented 78%” (Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention, p.2, RS-E).

Also in a positive change since 2013, the 2017 evaluation found that “maternal awareness was associated with positive differences in outcomes” for both fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity (Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention, p.44). Mothers who demonstrated unaided recall of Be Better ads also had higher levels of healthy eating and physical activity.

This unequivocally proves the effectiveness of the 2017 campaign, especially in comparison to prior campaigns. Researchers noted, however, that the differences between mothers interviewed illuminated “the need to more precisely target interventions and media campaigns to address the needs of families at different stages of their life (e.g., age, education) and culture” (Ibid.). The successful Be

Better campaign learned from its shortcomings and recognized an opportunity to become better itself.



Screenshot (RS-E)

## THEORETICAL APPLICATION

Champions for Change effectively learned from decades of experience honing their healthy lifestyle messages to low-income families. By pinpointing their campaign message down to three distinct, easily understandable and applicable suggestions (Eat Better, Be Active, Get Involved), marketing those messages with bright simple advertisements in English and Spanish and placing those ads in specifically designated market areas, the Be Better campaign proved that communication theory coupled with research equals success. Over just four years, California raised unaided recall of their ads from 38% to 78%. Perhaps most importantly, over those same four years, recalling Campaign for Change ads went from having no effect on healthy eating or physical activity, to having a positive correlation for both.



## REFERENCES

Champions for Change. (n.d.). Retrieved February 14, 2019, from <https://cachampionsforchange.cdph.ca.gov>

Drewnowski, A., & Eichelsdoerfer, P. (2010). Can Low-Income Americans Afford a Healthy Diet? *Nutrition Today*, 44(6), 246-249. doi:10.1097/NT.0b013e3181c29f79 Retrieved February 14, 2019, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2847733>

Ducharme, J. (2018, June 28). Only 23% of Americans Get Enough Exercise, a CDC Report Says. Retrieved February 14, 2019, from <http://time.com/5324940/americans-exercise-physical-activity-guidelines/>

Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch California Department of Public Health. (2018, January). Evaluation of the Champions for Change 2017 Be Better Media Campaign. Retrieved February 15, 2019, from [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/NEOPB/CDPH Document Library/RES\\_MediaEvaluation2017.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/NEOPB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/RES_MediaEvaluation2017.pdf)

Richtel, M., & Jacobs, A. (2018, March 23). American Adults Just Keep Getting Fatter. Retrieved February 14, 2019, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/23/health/obesity-us-adults.html>

RS-E. (n.d.). Champions for Change. Retrieved February 15, 2019, from <https://www.rs-e.com/work/champions-for-change/>

SNAP-Ed Toolkit. (n.d.). Champions for Change. Retrieved February 14, 2019, from <https://snapedtoolkit.org/interventions/programs/champions-for-change>

