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### CARU Revises Guidelines for Children's Advertising and Launches Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative

The Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU), part of the advertising industry's self-regulatory program, has revised its Guidelines in several significant ways, and has established a Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative to encourage advertisers to promote healthy products and lifestyle choices.

#### Guidelines

CARU's Guidelines apply to national advertising primarily directed to children under 12 years of age in all media. CARU monitors advertising directed to children, investigates complaints it receives, and determines whether certain advertising violates the Guidelines. CARU also offers an advisory service for advertisers.

CARU's Guidelines and Core Principles are based on the belief that children have limited knowledge, experience, and sophistication, and have a limited capacity to evaluate the credibility of information in advertising. CARU believes that advertisers "have special responsibilities when advertising to children or collecting data from children online," that they should not advertise products that are inappropriate for children, and that they should not create unreasonable expectations about a product's quality or performance.

The revised Guidelines have been expanded to include:

- Blurring between advertising and editorial content - a new provision prohibits advertising that "blurs the distinction between advertising and program/editorial content in ways that would be misleading to children."
- Advergaming - the revised Guidelines require that "if an advertiser integrates a commercial message into the content

of a game or activity, then the advertiser should make clear, in a manner that will be easily understood by the targeted audience, that it is an advertisement."

- Promoting healthy food and beverage products and habits – the Guidelines clarify that children's food advertising should not depict over-consumption or discourage or disparage healthy lifestyle or healthy dietary choices.

CARU has also added a definition of "national advertising" and revised its Core Principles by adding that "Advertising should be neither deceptive nor unfair, as these terms are applied under the Federal Trade Commission Act, to the children to whom it is directed." The Guidelines also address online data collection from children and stress that web site operators need to obtain verifiable parental consent before collecting personal information from children.

The CARU press release announcing the revisions noted that the group has not finished its review of product placement and advertising telephone services to children.

#### The Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative

The Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative is a voluntary self-regulation program designed to foster healthy dietary choices and healthy lifestyles among children. Companies who choose to become members agree to:

- Devote at least half of their advertising that is directed to children on television, radio, print and the Internet to promote and encourage healthier dietary choices, good nutrition and/or healthy lifestyles;

- Limit products shown in interactive games to healthier dietary choices, or incorporate healthy lifestyle messages into the games;
- Not advertise food or beverage products in elementary schools;
- Not engage in food and beverage product placement in editorial and entertainment content; and
- Reduce the use of third-party licensed characters in advertising that does not meet the Initiative's product or messaging criteria.

The following companies are charter members of the Initiative: Cadbury Schweppes USA, Campbell Soup Company, The Coca-Cola Company, General Mills, Inc., The Hershey Company, Kellogg Company, Kraft Foods Inc., McDonald's, PepsiCo, Inc. and Unilever.

The Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative is being led by C. Lee Peeler, the new President and CEO of the National Advertising Review Council and formerly Deputy Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection at the FTC. The Initiative will monitor member companies' compliance and will maintain a publicly accessible website that details the Initiative's findings.

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The new guidelines are online at <http://www.caru.org/guidelines/guidelines.pdf>

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