Background on Menu Labeling:
The federal government requires food establishments with 20 or more locations to display recommended daily caloric intake and calorie counts next to each menu item on menus, menu boards and drive-thru menus. The provisions also apply to vending machine operators who control 20 or more vending machines.

In addition to the federal menu labeling law, some states have adopted stricter provisions to help further educate consumers on their food choices.

Research shows that consumers significantly miscalculate the calories in fast-food. One study found that school-aged children, adolescents and adults all underestimated the caloric content of fast-food meals by averages ranging from 175 to 259 calories.¹

Why Louisiana Needs Menu Labeling:
• Food away from home accounts for 43% of total food spending and 32% of total caloric intake in the U.S.²
• Food away from home is typically high in total fat and saturated fat and low in nutrients. Reduced intake of high-calorie foods can lead to decreases in overweight and obesity.²
• Fast-food restaurants comprise 52% of all restaurants in Louisiana compared to a national average of 27%.³
• Louisiana was the most obese state in 2013 with 35% of adults reporting a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or above.⁴
• 40% of Louisiana youth (ages 10-17) are overweight or obese.⁵

Louisiana's Overall Health Rank, based on America's Health Rankings: 48th

Other Menu-Labeling & Diet Indicators⁴:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Indicator</th>
<th>Louisiana's Rank</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>50th</td>
<td>35% of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>48th</td>
<td>12% of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular Deaths</td>
<td>46th</td>
<td>319 deaths per 100,000 pop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of a State Menu-Labeling Law:
Oregon HB 2726 (2009) requires food establishments with 15 or more locations to display calories per menu item and recommended daily amounts of calories, saturated fats and sodium on menus and menu boards.

Projected Costs:
• Analyzing the nutritional content of a menu costs an estimated $45,600 (ranging from $22,000 to $69,300) per restaurant chain.⁷
Below are potential analysis methods and their associated costs⁸:
  • Menu analysis software ($200+)
  • Contract provider, dietitian or lab to conduct menu analysis (ranging from $49 for 10 menu items to $150 per menu item)
• Prior to the federal menu-labeling law, the Food and Drug Administration estimated that more than half of chain restaurants had already conducted analyses on their menu items.⁷
Strengths

• Menu labels at point-of-decision increase awareness of caloric content.\(^9,10\)
• Consumers have a positive attitude toward menu labeling and most consider it useful for making healthy choices.\(^9\)
• Menu labeling promotes transparency of product information for paying customers.
• Though the evidence is limited, menu labeling does not appear to interfere with restaurant revenue.\(^9\)
• Evidence from research suggests that certain populations may decrease caloric intake when using menu labels.\(^9,10\)

Barriers

• More research is needed in real-world settings to gauge the impact of menu labeling on consumer behaviors.
• Menu labeling requires restaurants to spend money on menu analyses and updated versions of menus, menu-boards and drive-thru menus.

Next Steps for Louisiana:

Louisiana has the opportunity to further educate consumers and promote healthy choices by supplementing the federal menu-labeling requirements for food establishments with less than 20 locations.

Additional research briefs on Louisiana Public Health Strategies can be found at prc.tulane.edu/publications

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References