

## Selling to Kids

Children are bombarded with advertising messages everywhere they turn. Helping kids understand how advertising works can help protect them from being exploited by advertisers.

Start by teaching kids under seven the difference between a TV program and a commercial. Point out commercials and use a timer to show them when the commercial begins and ends. Ask questions to help them recognize the purpose of the commercial is to sell them a product. What is the commercial selling? How does the commercial make them feel? Would they like to buy the product?

Once kids understand that advertising is about persuading them to buy a product, they can begin to identify other types of advertising messages such as product placement, website games, and guerilla marketing. Watch TV or play a video game with your child and find the products and logos used as a prop or part of the storyline. Have a conversation about how the messages try to get you to buy the product.

### Here are some key questions to ask about any advertising message:

#### Who created this message?

- Who wrote the words or took the picture?
- Why are they sending this message?
- Whom do they want to see this message?
- Who makes money from the ad?

#### What words, images, and sounds are used to attract my attention?

- What colors stand out? Is music used? Words? Narration? Sound effects?
- Is a celebrity featured in the ad?
- What are the people doing? Is it something I like to do?
- Does the ad make me think the people in the ad are cool? Happy? Healthy?

#### What is really being “sold” in this message?

- What does the ad say?
- What do you know about the product from looking at the ad?
- Is something left out that you think should be included?

#### What does the message mean to me?

- How does the ad make me feel about the product?
- Would my parents or friends feel the same way?
- Do I want to buy the product? Why or why not?

**The same questions can be asked about any media message with just a few minor changes—substitute the word ad or product with the name of another media form.**