



## **TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH'S RESPONSE TO NEW FEDERAL DIETARY GUIDELINES**

*From Sidewalks to School Lunches, Much More Must Be Done to Curb Obesity*

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**Washington, DC, January 12, 2005 – The following is a statement from Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of Trust for America's Health (TFAH):**

“The new federal dietary guidelines unveiled today are an important advancement in America's struggle to combat obesity. The guidelines do a good job of translating science into common sense recommendations for individuals about ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

However, they do not address many of the underlying causes and contributing factors of the obesity epidemic. The guidelines place the focus where it's always been -- on an “eat less, exercise more” message aimed at individuals, without addressing the fact that this approach does not work in isolation.

To effectively battle obesity, we must recognize the crucial role government can play. Every level of government, from Capitol Hill to county councils, must promote and enact policies that create an environment conducive to personal success. From sidewalks to school lunches, there is a lot more our government could be doing.

Yet state policies and programs are often nonexistent or fragmented. Federal policy lacks designated leadership and relies on a bureaucratic tangle of involved agencies and departments. Trust for America's Health calls for a series of policy recommendations to address the underlying causes of obesity and to reinforce the personal behavior message.”

### **TFAH Obesity Policy Recommendations**

To help combat the obesity crisis, TFAH recommends some crucial government actions in the report, including:

- 1. The CDC should be designated as the “command and control center” to manage the obesity epidemic.**
- 2. Research and implementation for cures, community programs, and treatment must be “fast-tracked.”**

- All research must be expedited to fill the large gaps in the available scientific information on obesity so that health officials are better able to understand and contain the epidemic.

**3. “Checks and balances” must be instituted for state and federal programs.**

- The effectiveness of obesity research and programs must be regularly evaluated.
- The CDC and other federal agencies must have the authority to without funds from states that do not comply with information reporting requirements.

**4. Upfront funds to combat obesity must be increased to save lives and taxpayer dollars.**

- New tax policies should also be explored that create incentives, such as for employer-provided wellness programs and for real estate developers to convert brownfields into activity-oriented facilities, or include green space and accessible sidewalks in their plans for residential development.

TFAH’s policy recommendations are from an October 2004 TFAH report, *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America*, which examined state-by-state and federal policies related to obesity. The report and related materials are available at <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/obesity/>

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*Trust for America’s Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority. [www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org)*