

## **States Starving for Obesity Funding as Citizens Get Fatter, NACDD Says**

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ATLANTA, Aug. 28 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) supports a new report by Trust for America's Health that found that adult and childhood obesity is growing at record proportions, especially in the South. The association called on the collective efforts of schools, communities, businesses and government to provide a long-term solution to today's obesity epidemic.

"As this report points out, we now have a growing evidence base to take on this important public health problem," said Dr. Marcus Plescia, NACDD board member and North Carolina representative member, who was involved in the report's review. "The problem is that while many states across the nation have excellent obesity plans, they are starving for resources as our citizens get fatter."

"Addressing the obesity epidemic and the many related chronic diseases requires the collective effort of communities, schools, business and all levels of government," said David Hoffman, director, Bureau of Chronic Disease Services, New York State Department of Health and New York representative member, who also reviewed the report prior to its release. "Reports like 'F as in Fat' go a long way to inform the dialogue we all need to engage in if we expect to impact this growing threat."

"Obesity is a complex disease and it will only get better when communities have multi-faceted interventions in place to help people make better choices related to exercise and diet," said John Robitscher, NACDD executive director. "The time to act is now, before too long the compounding costs of this epidemic will overwhelm an already fragile and fragmented healthcare system."

In the report released yesterday, Mississippi topped the list with the highest rate of adult obesity in the country for the third year in a row, and is the first state to reach a rate of over 30 percent (at 30.6 percent). Colorado was the leanest state again this year, however, its adult obesity rate increased over the past year (from 16.9 to 17.6 percent). Ten of the 15 states with the highest rates of adult obesity are located in the South. Rates of adult obesity now exceed 25 percent in 19 states, an increase from 14 states last year and 9 in 2005. In 1991, none of the states exceeded 20 percent.

The report also finds that rates of overweight children (ages 10 to 17) ranged from a high of 22.8 percent in Washington, D.C., to a low of 8.5 percent in Utah. Eight of the 10 states with the highest rates of overweight children were in the South.

"Today's environment does not always promote healthy food and physical activity choices," said Paula Marmet, NACDD president. "Children are bombarded with marketing messages about snack food and high calorie beverages at school, at home and via internet-based promotions, while recess

and daily physical education classes are being eliminated from schools and physical activity, in general, is reduced in daily routines. Our nation's children are facing a burden of chronic diseases, which will impact the quality of their lives, and ultimately, may cripple the U.S. health care system."

NACDD supports states in their obesity prevention efforts. State success stories can be found at NACDD's web site at <http://www.chronicdisease.org/>. Additionally, several of the association's councils and interest groups are working to build workforce and funding of state health departments to address risk factors of obesity, including poor diet and lack of physical activity, as well as obesity's related chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Other Key Findings from *F as in Fat 2007*: -- Twenty-two percent of American adults report that they do not engage in any physical activity. Mississippi has the highest rate of inactivity at 31.6 percent and Minnesota had the lowest rate of inactivity at 15.4 percent. -- Seventeen states require their school lunches, breakfasts and snacks to meet higher nutritional standards than the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires (six states enacted new laws in 2006-07). -- Twenty-two states have set nutritional standards for foods sold in vending machines, a la carte, in school stores, or in bake sales in schools (nine states enacted new laws in 2006-07), and 26 states limit when and where these foods may be sold on school property beyond federal requirements (six states enacted new laws in 2006-07). -- While every state has school physical education requirements, many are limited in scope or are not enforced. About NACDD

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors is a national public health association founded in 1988 to link the chronic disease program directors of each state and U.S. territory to provide a national forum for chronic disease prevention and control efforts. NACDD provides state-based leadership and expertise for chronic disease prevention and control at the state and national level. More information about NACDD and NACDD's Obesity Workgroup is available at <http://www.chronicdisease.org/>.

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