

Keep ME Healthy

[Organization] Position Statement

The [Organization Name] is committed to promoting healthy weight and taking steps to improve the prevention, diagnosis, and management of obesity.

Obesity: A Compelling Health Problem for Maine

We face a health problem of unparalleled significance in this nation and in Maine: two out of three adults, and nearly one of three children, are overweight or obese. Obesity is associated with serious health risks and creates a significant health burden to those affected including its strong linkages to the most prevalent chronic illnesses, including diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It raises profound economic challenges: a recent report estimates the combined costs of physical inactivity, overweight and obesity in Maine total more than \$2.56 billion/year.ⁱ This problem clearly is complex and multi-factorial and everyone must take a role in addressing it, but as health care leaders we must be at the forefront of the action to increase awareness and help reverse this tide.

National leaders and public opinion polls for the past decade have called on physicians to take an increased role in prevention and early recognition of obesity, yet significant gaps exist in our ability as healthcare providers to respond to this crisis. Reports suggest that primary care providers have not yet made Body Mass Index (BMI) measurement a routine part of their practice, even though national standards recommending routine BMI measurement for adults and children have existed for several years.^{ii, iii} Even when obesity is identified, physicians have often been reluctant to discuss the diagnosis with patients and families, and until recently, have felt ill-equipped with the language or tools needed to address the issue.

Tools for Change

Fortunately, many leading healthcare organizations have recognized the compelling need to take action, and are providing tools for clinicians to use in their interactions with patients and families to address this difficult issue. These include:

- National Heart Lung and Blood Institute guidelines advising routine assessment of weight in adults using BMI and brief focused healthy weight messaging.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The Expert Panel recommendations on childhood obesity from the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Health Resources and Services Administration.^{iv}
- Recommendations from the American Academy of Family Physicians on treating overweight patients.^v
- The Maine Center for Public Health's "Keep ME Healthy" program and Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative [MYOC], including the "Let's Go" Childhood Obesity Resource Toolkit for Healthcare Professionals.^{vi}

A Call to Action – The Role of the [Organization]

Our organization is committed to improving the prevention, diagnosis, and management of obesity by making a commitment to the following actions:

- We will educate & train clinicians and practice teams to regularly assess and track weight using BMI (including in emerging electronic medical records systems); to promote healthy weight messages related to healthy eating and physical activity; and to respectfully address with patients the health issues associated with overweight and obesity.
- We will encourage our physicians to leverage their influence at the community level to advocate for policies and build an environment that promotes healthy eating and physical activity.
- We will promote the consistent delivery of healthy weight messages (e.g. "5210") to patients and across our community, and will encourage physicians and other clinicians to model and provide leadership for behaviors that promote a life-long commitment to healthy weight.
- We will adopt policies within our organization that encourage physical activity and healthy food choices for our employees, clients and the community.
- We will urge employers and health plans to adopt healthcare benefit plans that support appropriate medical services to prevent, diagnose, and treat obesity.

[NAME, Organizational title] noted, "We know that addressing obesity is a difficult and complex issue, and are committed as health care leaders to promoting healthy weight as a cornerstone of health for our community. If any other disease or condition threatened our health to this degree, we would have taken action long ago. Now is the time to act, and we are committed to being leaders in this effort".

ⁱ "A Lifestyle We Can't Afford", A Topline Report, from "An Economic Cost Appraisal of Inactivity, Overweight, and Obesity Among Maine Adults", Chenowith and Associates, May 2007.

ⁱⁱ "Prevention of Pediatric Overweight and Obesity", Policy Statement, Pediatrics, Vol. 112 No.2, August 2003.

ⁱⁱⁱ Practical Guide to the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, NHLBI Obesity Education Expert Panel, NIH Publication 00-4084, October 2000.

^{iv} Expert Committee Recommendations Regarding the Prevention, Assessment, and Treatment of Child and Adolescent Overweight and Obesity: Summary Report, Sarah E. Barlow and Expert Committee, *Pediatrics* 2007;120;S164-S192.

^v Practical Advice for Family Physicians to Help Overweight Patients, AN *AMERICAN FAMILY PHYSICIAN* Monograph, Susanna E. Guzman, in consultation with The American Academy of Family Physicians Panel on Obesity, 2003.

^{vi} MCPH website: www.mcph.org/