



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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STOP OBESITY ALLIANCE ANNOUNCES NEW RESEARCH INDICATING THAT EMPLOYERS WANT TO ADDRESS OBESITY IN THE WORKPLACE, NEED MORE GUIDANCE

National Survey Findings Released As Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Evaluates New Obesity Benefit Designed by DMAA

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 22, 2008 - Employers and employees agree: The workplace is an appropriate setting for responding to weight management issues, according to new research by the Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago.

Lead NORC researchers said the survey findings demonstrate willingness to and a desire for help. Across the board, all employees - including people who are average weight, overweight, and people who are obese - exhibited a strong desire for weight management help from their employers. They also indicated a willingness to pay more for various workplace weight-loss options, including exercise programs, nutritional counseling and other means. Employers also acknowledged their role in providing obesity prevention and management options for their employees.

"Effective obesity prevention interventions can help save millions of American lives and reduce health care costs in our nation. The workplace is where adults spend the bulk of their time and employers can play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles and providing options to overcome overweight and obesity," said Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, 17th Surgeon General of the United States (2002-2006), Vice Chairman of Canyon Ranch, President of the non-profit Canyon Ranch Institute, Distinguished Professor at the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health at the University of Arizona, and Health and Wellness Chairperson for the Alliance Steering Committee. "With its diverse collaboration of organizations, the STOP Obesity Alliance is uniquely positioned to help employers identify new, effective solutions that address the nation's obesity epidemic."

Relating to this need, two STOP Obesity Alliance Steering Committee members, DMAA: The Care Continuum Alliance and Service Employees International Union (SEIU), have joined to examine an obesity benefit designed by DMAA that may be piloted by SEIU employees. This effort, which if executed will be evaluated for effectiveness, supports a STOP Obesity Alliance policy recommendation for innovative approaches to preventing and managing overweight and obesity. It also typifies the kind of innovation that could help the country take a step toward overcoming obesity.

Key Employer & Employee Survey Findings

- 71% of employers view offering obesity-related services as appropriate
- 80% of employees, regardless of weight, agree healthy lifestyles/weight management programs belong in the workplace
- 73% of employers view offering obesity-related services as effective



- 67% of employers are concerned about the effects of obesity on medical claims expenses
- 93% of employers see obesity as a preventable condition and the result of poor lifestyle choices
- Less than half of employers believe their company has given enough attention to the problem of obesity

"Facing rising health care costs, employers are willing to address obesity head-on in the workplace," said Jon Gabel, a Senior Fellow at NORC and the principal investigator, on the study. "By their actions, businesses seem to be saying that regardless of whose fault it is, obesity is my company's problem. And I need to do something about it."

Additional results from the survey are currently under review for future publication.

For more information about the STOP Obesity Alliance/NORC survey results and additional information, visit www.stopobesityalliance.org. Visit the DMAA site, www.dmaa.org, for information on the obesity benefit design under review by SEIU.

About the STOP Obesity Alliance

The STOP Obesity Alliance is directed by Associate Professor Christine Ferguson, J.D., P.I. of The George Washington University's Department of Health Policy and former Health Commissioner for the State of Massachusetts. The Alliance Steering Committee is comprised of the following public and private sector organizations: the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, American Medical Group Association, Canyon Ranch Institute, CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO), DMAA: The Care Continuum Alliance, National Business Group on Health, National Committee for Quality Assurance, National Quality Forum, The Obesity Society, Reality Coalition, Service Employees International Union and Trust for America's Health. The Alliance is sponsored by sanofi-aventis U.S. LLC, a world leader in the pharmaceutical industry with a commitment to improving public health and a heritage in therapeutic areas including cardiovascular and metabolic diseases.

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