

ADAF takes first steps toward childhood healthy weight initiative

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The ADAF Childhood Healthy Weight Task Force convened an expert panel in January 2001 to discuss how the foundation might best contribute to a nationwide effort to reduce the epidemic of childhood obesity. Experts from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, corporations, researchers, and dietetics leaders identified many ideas that clustered around four themes: family nutrition and physical activity, civic/community involvement, education/skill development of dietetics professionals, and development of a comprehensive public/private road map to foster a coordinated approach among stakeholder organizations attempting to address this issue.

The discussion of family nutrition and physical activity included ideas such as identifying or developing a family nutrition and activity screening tool that might be featured in a National Nutrition Month campaign; developing a Web-based children's self-assessment tool that could be provided through elementary schools and/or the Internet; and teaching people who routinely come into contact with children how to spot the early signs of obesity and how to get counseling or a referral for intervention when appropriate. This interdisciplinary approach might involve partnering with pediatricians, family practice physicians, psychologists, social workers, teachers, and family therapists, in addition to dietitians and other nutrition professionals.

The potential for increasing civic/community involvement includes the possibility of developing a collaborative community civic action model for dietetic personnel; adopting or developing a community assessment tool; and beginning a grassroots initiative to help dietitians make community changes that would create an environment supporting healthy eating and increased physical activity.

The third focus area centered on continuing to enhance the skills of dietetics personnel in physical activity, behavioral counseling, family life skills, and community/civic leadership. This initiative would entail creating a method of disseminating and supporting implementation of best practices in family and

community interventions—perhaps a Web site of best practices that would be available to the public. A market analysis of employment opportunities for a dietetics professional with additional certification in behavioral counseling, family counseling, and physical activity needs to be completed. This analysis would also identify the specific corresponding skills, training and certification.

The expert panel also identified the need for a national road map created by public and private stakeholders to serve as a framework for activities by interested organizations. This road map would allow ongoing strategic planning, foster collaboration, and reduce duplicated effort among all interested organizations. Since the road map would focus on preventing and treating childhood obesity, it would need to fit into the overall national obesity framework and have the commitment of key stakeholders.

As the ADAF moves forward, one or more of these identified focus areas may be selected as the basis of fund-raising activities. The Foundation is committed to making a meaningful contribution to reducing childhood obesity.

The Children's Healthy Weight Task Force is chaired by Guy Johnson, PhD. Task force members include Dave Andrews, PhD, Susan Borra, RD, Polly Fitz, MA, RD, Molly Gee, MEd, RD, LD, Nylda Gemple, RD, Esther Myers, PhD, and Kenneth Wear, MS, RD.

The Task Force added the following experts who participated in the expert panel summary: William H. Dietz, MD, PhD, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Jeanne P. Goldberg, PhD, RD, Tufts University; James O. Hill, PhD, University of Colorado; Van S. Hubbard, MD, PhD, National Institutes of Health; Eileen Kennedy, DSc, USDA; William Layden, Porter Novelli; Brenda Moore, MS, International Life Sciences Institute; Rosemary Riley, PhD, LD, Ross Products Division; Sachiko T. St. Jeor, PhD, RD, FADA, University of Nevada; and Larry Webber, PhD, Tulane University.

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