About September 2015

NATIONAL CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH

In the past four decades, obesity rates in the United States have soared among all age groups. This rise in obesity rates has affected our youth in alarming fashion. Childhood obesity has increased more than fourfold among those ages 6 to 11. More than 23 million children and teenagers in the United States ages 2 to 19 are obese or overweight, a statistic that health and medical experts consider an epidemic. And this epidemic puts nearly one third of America’s children at early risk for Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and even stroke – conditions usually associated with adulthood. Even greater disparities exist among young Hispanics and children of color.

But there are opportunities every day to change these trends. And this September, there is an extraordinary opportunity to build awareness and take action – nationally, as well as in your state, city, workplace and home.

September 2010 was the first-ever Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, calling national attention and action to this epidemic. This year, recognize September 2015 as the fourth annual National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month by taking the opportunity to unite with leaders in the White House and Congress, with the Governor of your state and Mayor of your city, and with all in your community who care about our youth and the health of our nation today and tomorrow. Here are some highlights:

► September 2015 is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. National, state, and local leaders are called on to support and observe the month.

► Organizations around the United States will plan and carry out activities that build awareness about childhood obesity and encourage action.

► And individuals – we hope you – will take steps within your family, on your block, in your community to help reverse the rise of childhood obesity. Every person in the U.S. can be an important part of Childhood Obesity Awareness Month by taking small steps that add up to a big difference: Eating more balanced meals and snacks, engaging in physical activity more regularly, and sharing your personal plan and commitment with family and friends of all ages.

This toolkit provides information, Web links and tools to promote and celebrate September as National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. We wish you much success in helping the U.S. ensure a healthier future for our most important resource: our children.
The Childhood Obesity Awareness Month Toolkit

The overarching goal of COAM is to continue to build awareness of the childhood obesity epidemic and to motivate families and communities to become healthier through programming and events.

Central to making this happen are the efforts of a broad coalition of organizations, institutions, advocates and individuals. Imagine the power of a large, informal network, working in every community to inform and engage all Americans in this important effort.

This online toolkit makes it easy for you to build awareness of National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month by promoting it in the media, enlisting the support of elected officials, and planning events that encourage healthy lifestyles.

In this toolkit you’ll find:

- A Fact Sheet about the month with key points about the need and the Month
- What You Can Do to Promote Childhood Obesity Awareness Month (tips and suggestions to get you started; the possibilities are endless!)
- Pitching and Media Relations Tips to help you get the word out through the media.
- Sample Letter to the Editor which you can customize and send to your local paper. This will reach the opinion leaders and others who read the op/ed pages.
- Sample News Release you can adapt to announce your organization’s activities in support of the Month. Send or submit it online to papers, radio stations and TV stations. You may prompt coverage in news stories or calendar announcements.
- Public Service Announcement (PSA) scripts to send to radio stations. They can either pre-record them or read them live on the air to fill available airtime and perform a service to the community.
- Draft Proclamations so you can ask your mayor and governor to get behind the Month. Most elected officials and their staff are happy to support initiatives that help everyone and are non-controversial and cost-free.
- Social Media Messages you can post, tweet, send or share in any fashion.

NOTES:

- Most newspapers, broadcast stations and political offices allow you to submit requests or information online if you prefer. Check their websites for Contact Us.
- Make these items your own. Feel free to customize these templates to reflect your community, your organization, or your individual experience. Reporters, editors and public officials want to connect with their constituents. They prefer to hear real stories from real people. These tools are designed to get you started—you take it from there!
- Think about how else you can promote Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. What organizations, employers or other groups can you enlist? What opportunities are there to collaborate on events? Can you get the word out through newsletters, social media or old-fashioned announcements?
Fact Sheet – Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

- September 2015 is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month.

- National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month recognizes the serious threat obesity poses to the health of America’s children and decreasing its prevalence in the United States.

- Dedicating at least one month per year to the crisis will help maximize the impact of programs, activities, messaging and campaigns – all aligned to help eradicate childhood obesity.

- Presidential and Congressional proclamations established September 2010 as the first National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. Governors and mayors around the country followed suit. Organizations of all types sponsored events to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of childhood obesity and to promote solutions.

- National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month is supported by leading national organizations. They help educate the public about the need for increased awareness, proactive steps to prevent childhood obesity in the United States and promotion of healthier lifestyles.

- Parents, health care providers, educators, civic leaders and organizations are encouraged to observe National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month with programs and activities to help prevent childhood obesity, promote healthy eating and physical activity, and increase awareness of childhood obesity among individuals of all ages and walks of life.

- One in three American children is already overweight or obese. They are at greater risk of cardiovascular disease, bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, psychological problems, bullying and more. This is a sobering public health issue, compounding as overweight and obesity continue into adulthood.

- The financial implications of childhood obesity are sobering, at $14 billion per year in direct health care costs alone. Increased awareness and prevention of childhood obesity will save billions of dollars in unnecessary health care costs and promote healthier lifestyles to improve and prolong the lives of the next generation of Americans.

- Protecting the health and wellbeing of American children for years to come is a critical endeavor. Adults must ensure that young people receive a healthy start in life.
Childhood Obesity Awareness Month Facts—Children with Disabilities

- Individuals with disabilities have higher rates of obesity (31% versus 20%) and physical inactivity (22% versus 12%) than those without disabilities.

- There are currently over 5.5 million children with disabilities in the US. As sedentary lifestyles are one of the leading causes of obesity, children with disabilities are at an even greater risk of obesity than those without disabilities. What is worse, some parents of children with disabilities believe that those disabilities may prevent their children from being physically active.

- Obesity disproportionately affects children of certain racial and ethnic groups. 25% of African American children and 23.3% of Hispanic children with disabilities are obese, while only 16.7% of Caucasian children with disabilities are obese.

- Health care expenditures associated with disabilities totaled nearly $400 billion in 2006 (27% of total healthcare expenditures).

- Health promotion programs have effectively decreased preventable conditions by 25% while reducing healthcare utilization costs, yet as of 2010, only 16 states, along with the District of Columbia, had health promotion programs for people with disabilities.

- Only 40% of children with physical disabilities and 77% of children with cognitive disabilities report feeling they fully participate in physical education classes.

- Children with disabilities are capable of being physically active now, as they can and do benefit from increasingly inclusive physical activity programs. These programs can help them develop habits now that will keep them from suffering from obesity- and inactivity-related complications and ailments in the future.

(Statistics provided by the Lakeshore Foundation. References available upon request)
Pitching and Media Relations Tips

Contacting a member of the media to get him/her to report on your story is called pitching. Think of it as a sales pitch for your story – you are trying to sell your story.

Pitching and media relations in general is a bit of an art; however, there are a few tips we can offer to help you get started if you would like to build awareness of National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month with your local media.

Every member of the media has a preferred method of contact, but the vast majority of journalists prefer pitches via email. If you know your contact’s preferred method, please use it appropriately; if not, use email.

General tips:
- Be brief; journalists receive hundreds of pitches daily and want you to get to the point.
- If a journalist contacts you, be ready to get back to her or him quickly. If you have offered them the opportunity to interview you or a spokesperson at your organization, make sure that person is available and ready to participate in an interview.
- Most interviews take place by phone unless you are doing an interview with a TV journalist. If doing an interview by phone, it’s best to use a landline for clarity.
- Don’t ask a journalist, “Did you get my email?” If you think your pitch may have been overlooked or didn’t go through, feel free to send it one more time but generally no response from a journalist means “No thank you.”
- ALWAYS keep the journalist’s audience in mind when pitching your story. Does this story appeal to their audience, readers, listeners, viewers, etc.? Today’s journalist may or may not have a “beat” – meaning they usually report on a particular topic such as health, politics, sports, etc. Try to pitch to members of the media who cover health, fitness or community affairs.
- During an interview, avoid asking if you can speak “off the record.” The reality is whatever you say can be used in a story.
- When doing an interview, try to stick to the story you want to tell. Practice three to four key messages that you want to be heard in your interview and try to focus on making sure those messages are intertwined in your answers.

Television tips:
- If you are pitching to a TV journalist, remember that their story relies on visuals. Offer them an opportunity to shoot the interview in an interesting setting with good light. Also, they are looking for action – try to help them find a setting where people are being physically active.
- Be conscious of their schedule. Most TV news programs book their in-studio guests a few days to several weeks in advance.
  - Morning programs are best reached after the program has finished for that day.
  - Evening and nightly news programs are best reached in the morning. Many TV news programs have a programming meeting mid-morning to discuss what they will cover for that day and who is assigned to which story.
  - Sixty to 90 minutes before the news program begins is a bad time to contact a TV journalist as they are preparing for their stories, writing scripts, etc.
- If you do not have a particular reporter to contact, the assignment desk for the newscasts or a producer for other types of programs are the best persons to contact.
- Dress professionally for your interview on camera. Avoid white or very light colors and busy patterns or prints – these don’t look very good on camera.
Radio tips:
- If you are pitching to a radio station, be especially conscious to be brief and think in sound bites. A front-page story on the news may be summarized in 30 seconds or less on the radio.
- In-studio guests are usually booked several days to weeks in advance.
- As with TV, be conscious of programming schedules when contacting these members of the media.
- In general, the producer for a program is the best person to contact to pursue coverage on the radio.

Print news tips:
- Daily newspapers have a tight turnover and deadlines. Newspaper reporters and editors are perhaps the most contacted of all journalists and therefore their time is in high demand. They are also doing more with fewer people. For the print publication, they are typically writing their stories in the mid-to-late afternoon and “put the story to bed” when you are finishing dinner at home.
- Weekly newspapers also have tough deadlines and typically appear on newsstands beginning Mondays. Their deadlines are usually on Wednesday or Thursday and these are the worst days to contact them.
- Magazines are usually working several months in advance (with the exception of large production weeklies). While they are more flexible, their story needs to be more “evergreen.”
- Typically, a local magazine will want to take a different approach than simply telling the news; they will want to go deeper with their story and try to paint a picture with words for their readers.

Online tips (news sites and bloggers):
- The newest journalist on the block is the blogger. The best bloggers to contact are those who have blogs that focus on the type of news you want to share. In this case, the best bloggers would be those who write about health, medicine, fitness, family matters, public policy, and community affairs.
- Every blogger is different so there aren’t as many “rules,” but they are perhaps most similar to newspaper journalists.
- Most newspaper journalists double as online news reporters too. They are always looking for new ways to differentiate their online content. They might be interested in including a short video clip alongside their story or recorded audio.
- Other news sites aren’t much different except their news cycle is 24/7. Stick to the “general” tips and you’ll do great!
Sample Letter to the Editor

Feel free to personalize the letter. Include specifics about childhood obesity in your community or explain why you care deeply about the issue.

Date

September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

Dear Editor,

As America wrangles daunting issues, no challenge is more urgent than protecting the health and wellbeing of our children—now, and as they grow.

Over the past several decades we have witnessed childhood obesity grow to epidemic proportions. More than 23 million children and teenagers are obese or overweight. That’s roughly one child in every three. Some groups are disproportionately affected.

These youngsters risk developing serious health problems in adulthood, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and several types of cancer. The financial impact is a sobering $14 billion per year in direct health care costs alone. The psychosocial consequences can hinder these kids academically and socially.

You can help: join our community in observing National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month this September. Parents, health care providers, educators, civic leaders and organizations have created programs and activities to promote healthy eating and physical activity.

The effort begins at home. Parents have enormous influence over their children’s lifestyles by the example they set and the decisions they make. By modeling healthy eating and physically active lifestyles, we can set our children on the road to a lifetime of good habits.

The fight against childhood obesity gains momentum in September, and the results can last a lifetime. All children deserve a healthy start in life; it’s our responsibility to make that possible. Learn more at www.COAM-month.org.

Insert Name
Optional: Insert Title if representing an organization
Insert Organization or City Name
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Insert month and date), 2015

For more information contact:
Insert Name at insert phone number and insert email address
Insert name of organization
Information and resources at www.COAM-month.org

ORG NAME JOINS THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILDHOOD OBESITY
Program/Activity Name Supports National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month.

INSERT NAME OF CITY OF RELEASE – In recognition of National Childhood Obesity Month, insert organization name has launched name of program/activity. The program/activity is part of a national effort to eradicate childhood obesity in the United States and ensure young people get a healthy start in life.

Insert 2-3 sentences describing the program/activity, who is involved, when it is taking place and where it is happening.

During the past four decades, obesity rates have soared among all age groups, increasing more than fourfold among children ages six to 11. More than 23 million children and teenagers (31.8 percent) ages two to 19 are obese or overweight, a statistic that health and medical experts consider an epidemic.

“The growing rate of childhood obesity in our country is alarming,” said insert name of spokesperson, organization name. “National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month and insert name of program/activity recognizes the serious threat obesity poses to the health of America’s children and the importance of decreasing its prevalence not only in insert city name, but across the entire United States.”

NOTE: May replace the preceding with an original quote from your organization.

Obese young people have an 80-percent chance of becoming obese adults and are more likely than children of normal weight to become overweight or obese adults. As a result, they are more at risk for associated adult health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, stroke, several types of cancer and osteoarthritis.

The financial implications add up to a sobering $14 billion per year in direct health care costs alone. Americans spend approximately nine percent of their total medical costs on obesity-related illnesses. Additionally, there are psychosocial consequences that can hinder academic and social functioning and persist into adulthood.

“These severe consequences underscore the critical importance of children and teens to participate in physical activity and to engage in healthy eating habits,” said spokesperson. “Childhood obesity is entirely preventable. It’s up to adults to encourage these healthy habits.”

September 2010 was the first National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, established by presidential and congressional proclamations. "Nothing can be more important than protecting the health and wellbeing of our children for years to come. With a strong unity of purpose, we can make a difference for our kids," said Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge, who co-sponsored the House resolution. “I look forward to parents, health care providers, educators, civic leaders and organizations joining the effort to end childhood obesity."
“Childhood obesity is a public health crisis,” said Congresswoman Kay Granger, a co-sponsor. “Children need information and guidance to make informed decisions about food and exercise. Childhood Obesity Awareness Month supports the goals of families, schools, and communities who are working to ensure we raise a healthier generation. If we keep our kids healthy now it will alleviate a major burden on our health care system while giving millions of young people the opportunity to live longer, healthier lives.”

In observance of National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month this September, organizations, advocates and families nationwide are again planning events and activities to build awareness of childhood obesity and ways to combat it. Information and resources are available online at www.COAM-month.org.

If desired, insert boilerplate information about the organization in 2-3 sentences.
Radio Public Service Announcements (PSA)
Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

30 Seconds:

Twenty-three million American children and teenagers are obese or overweight. These kids risk grown-up health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancer. The cost? More than 14 billion dollars a year.


A public service announcement from [STATION].

10 Seconds:

Governor's Proclamation: Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

WHEREAS September 2015 is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month;

WHEREAS during the past four decades, obesity rates have soared among all age groups, increasing more than fourfold among children ages 6 to 11;

WHEREAS 31.8 percent or 23 million children and teenagers ages 2 to 19 are obese or overweight, a statistic that health and medical experts consider an epidemic;

WHEREAS significant disparities exist among the obesity rates of children based on ethnicity and economic status;

WHEREAS the financial implications of childhood obesity pose a financial threat to our economy and health care system, carrying up to $14 billion per year in direct health care costs, with people in the United States spending about 9 percent of their total medical costs on obesity-related illnesses;

WHEREAS obese young people have an 80-percent chance of being obese adults and are more likely than children of normal weight to become overweight or obese adults, and therefore more at risk for associated adult health problems including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, stroke, several types of cancer, and osteoarthritis;

WHEREAS due in part to the childhood obesity epidemic, 1 in 3 children (and nearly 1 in 2 minority children) born in the year 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes at some point in their lifetime if current trends continue;

WHEREAS some consequences of childhood and adolescent obesity are psychosocial and can hinder academic and social functioning and persist into adulthood;

WHEREAS participating in physical activity is important for children and teens as it can have beneficial effects not only on body weight, but also on blood pressure and bone strength;

WHEREAS proper nutrition is important for children before birth and through their lifespan as nutrition has beneficial effects for health and body weight, and is important in the prevention of chronic diseases;

WHEREAS childhood obesity is preventable, yet does not appear to be declining, and

WHEREAS public, community-based, and private sector organizations and individuals throughout the United States are working to decrease childhood obesity rates in the United States through a range of efforts including educational presentations, media campaigns, websites, policies, healthier food options, and greater opportunities for physical activity;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ________________________________, Governor of ________________________________, do hereby proclaim the month of September 2015 as

CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH

in the State of ________________________________, and encourage organizations, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, other entities, and the people of our state to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities with the goal of promoting healthy eating and physical activity and increasing awareness of childhood obesity among individuals of all ages and walks of life.

_____________________________________________________, Governor

DATED THIS _________ DAY OF _________ 2015
Mayor’s Proclamation: Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

WHEREAS September 2015 is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month;

WHEREAS during the past four decades, obesity rates have soared among all age groups, increasing more than fourfold among children ages 6 to 11;

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NOW, THEREFORE, I, ________________________________,

Mayor of ________________________________ , do hereby proclaim the month of September 2015 as

CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH

in the City of ________________________________, and encourage organizations, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, other entities, and the people of our city to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities with the goal of promoting healthy eating and physical activity and increasing awareness of childhood obesity among individuals of all ages and walks of life.

____________________________________________________, Mayor

DATED THIS _________ DAY OF _________ 2015
Promote National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month on Social Media

Sample Tweets (Please use #ChildObesity in all your Twitter messages.)

- September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. See what’s going on around the country at www.COAM-month.org. #ChildObesity

- Use #ChildObesity in your tweets this September to join the conversation during National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month.

- #ChildObesity affects 23 million children and teenagers in the U.S. Our organization does _______ to help.


- Planning a Sep. event to help kids be active & healthy? Tell everyone about it & visit www.COAM-month.org. #ChildObesity

- #ChildObesity is an epidemic in the U.S. If you want to help, but don’t know how, check out resources & ideas at www.COAM-month.org.

- Activate National #ChildObesity Awareness Month in your community. Download the toolkit to help get you started. www.COAM-month.org.


- Make #ChildObesity a priority. See www.COAM-month.org. Show your followers you want a healthy future for our children.

- #ff #ChildObesity (You can include COAM partner handles or organizations in your community that combat childhood obesity.)

Sample Facebook Posts (You can also make COAM your Facebook profile photo.)

- September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. In the U.S. alone, 23 million children and teenagers are overweight or obese. Visit www.COAM-month.org to learn about securing a healthy future for our nation’s children.

- (Information about your organization’s COAM event.) There are events being held across the country for National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. www.COAM-month.org.

- Childhood obesity is a year-round problem. September puts it in focus during National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. Visit www.COAM-month.org for facts and tools.

- Individuals with disabilities have higher rates of obesity (31% versus 20%) and physical inactivity (22% versus 12%) than those without disabilities. See www.COAM-month.org.