Sizing Up America
Public Policy Deliberation Guide

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Produced by:
American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences
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Why address obesity as a public issue?

Sixty-five percent of U. S. adults are either overweight or obese (CDC)**.** Being overweight means that a person has a body mass index of 25 or more, while a person who is obese has a body mass index of 30 or more.

With the health of individuals and the nation threatened and choices for response unclear, the American Association of Family Consumer Sciences, in partnership with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, identified obesity as a compelling issue that is appropriate for public deliberation because obesity:

- Is of broad concern as evidenced by extent of media coverage, reporting of related research and federal or state attention as evidenced by passage of resolutions or laws, regulations, legislative studies, hearings, or grants in the area.

- Demands choices but there are no clear or right answers. Solutions to obesity lie in diverse fields, education, food industry, business, and government.

- Requires a range of people and groups to act for society to effectively move forward.

- Is an issue wherein new approaches need to be developed in order to be resolved?

- Is an issue where citizens have not had the chance to consider different courses of action and long-term consequences?

- Decisions by office holders and other leaders need to be informed by public judgment as well as expert views.

Framing the issue of obesity can help combat the problem that research findings are not in the hands of citizens and public decision makers in a useable form. It can bring the public voice to decision makers in a helpful and usable way. It can also open dialogue between policy makers and their constituents on an issue that has profound personal and societal implications on a number of outcomes, including health, psychological and economic.

What is a deliberative guide?

The *Sizing Up America: Public Policy Deliberation Guide* was developed to guide citizens in deliberating public policy approaches to address the issue. It will be used in forums across the United States designed to discover common ground.

The prerequisite to any legitimate public action is knowledge of the public voice--judgments people make about the purposes and directions of their communities, states, and the nation. The public voice is obtained by carefully considering what people think about a given issue and further, what they want to do to address it with any local, state, or national action or policy. Moving citizens to common ground often requires a positive catalyst.

A deliberative guide provides a framework to help people thoughtfully and carefully consider a variety of policy directions designed to address the problem. It assists the public in coming to thoughtful judgment about what should be done.

How was the guide developed?

Using input from a survey of 635 AAFCS members, a guide was created and distributed to over 900 participants of an Obesity Summit conducted during the 2005 AAFCS Annual Meeting. Participants were asked to carefully consider the policy choices presented in the draft guide, provide thoughts to enhance the three approaches, and to suggest other public policy choices that should be considered. The wealth of input from those participants was used to revise the guide. Revised versions were introduced to participants at the fall AAFCS Leadership Conference.

How can the guide be accessed?

All materials can be downloaded from the AAFCS website: www.aafcs.org

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