



Dear Boys Scouts of America Leadership,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Academy for Eating Disorders, an international organization committed to the treatment, education, and prevention of eating disorders. We are joining like-minded organizations such as the National Eating Disorders Association and Binge Eating Disorder Association in expressing our concern regarding your new fitness guidelines for your annual Jamboree. As outlined on your national website, eligibility for participation in this year's Jamboree is based largely on BMI. Members with a BMI of 40 or above will not be allowed to participate in the event, while those with a BMI between 32 and 39.9 must submit medical information to be approved. As identified on your web site, it appears the goal for this new policy is to promote physical health and activity allowing Scouts to lead and maintain a "sustainable lifestyle." This mission is admirable, but as leading treatment professionals and researchers in the field of eating disorders, this type of policy causes significant alarm due to its reductionist and exclusionary nature.

The reason for this is twofold: it promotes the faulty association that health is solely related to weight, and exclusionary criteria based solely on BMI creates size discrimination and stigma. Both have severe, endearing, and adverse impacts of on health.

Weight alone cannot be a sole marker for physical health. Consistent and evolving research now demonstrates that weight as measured by BMI is only one factor in determining physical health.

Furthermore, studies have shown that overweight and obese children who are victimized because of their weight are more vulnerable to depression, low self-esteem, and poor body image. Weight bias also increases the likelihood that children will be socially isolated as well as more prone to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Additionally, children who experience weight stigma are less likely to engage in physical activity while more likely to adhere to unhealthy eating behaviors such as binge eating or dangerous weight control behaviors such as restrictive eating, purging, or diuretic and laxative abuse (Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, 2013).

The Boy Scouts of America have a long commitment to promoting positive physical, emotional, and social health amongst youngsters. We are confident that the current fitness guidelines were implemented with the best of intentions, and will be modified to maintain your history of promoting health and wellness by allowing all participants to engage in a variety of activities to match their given fitness level. Please feel free to contact us via our web site www.aedweb.org if you have any questions or we may be of assistance in addressing this matter.



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Respectfully,
The Academy for Eating Disorders