



## **Weight Stigmatization Prevalent in Youth Television Programming**

**DEERFIELD, IL – September 17, 2014** – A recently published study by researchers in Minnesota has found that weight stigma is prevalent in popular youth television programming. Published online in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders* (IJED) by Marla Eisenberg, ScD, MPH, and colleagues, the study found that half of the popular television shows preferred by sampled youth contained at least one weight stigmatizing event. These instances of teasing and weight- and shape-focused comments were often met with audience laughter or neutrality. Overall, study findings suggest youth are exposed to instances of weight stigmatization from an early age in a format that conveys that these behaviors are socially acceptable.

Additionally, the study revealed that approximately 40 percent of weight stigmatization was directed at television characters of average weight, which sends the message that one's body is not good enough regardless of shape or size. This has shown to be a strong contributor to body dissatisfaction among youngsters. Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, PhD, MPH, RD, a co-author on the study states, "This study provides evidence of one more problematic source contributing to weight stigmatization. Research consistently shows that weight stigmatization is associated with poorer emotional well-being, greater use of disordered eating behaviors, and weight gain over time."

Study results confirm the need for positive representation of all weights and body shapes in the mainstream media. Families are encouraged to engage in body-positive dialogue as early as possible. It is important for professionals working with youth to discuss the impact of these harmful messages and work with youngsters and families around these issues. According to Dr. Neumark-Sztainer, "It is past time to be taking weight stigmatization seriously."

### **About AED**

The Academy for Eating Disorders (AED) is a global and interdisciplinary organization of eating disorder professionals. Connecting more than 1600 members from 47 countries, the AED provides eating disorder information and education including public outreach programming and educational resources; training for professionals; multi-disciplinary collaboration through a number of platforms, including clinical teaching days, conferences, AED's scientific publication, the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, and many other programs. For more information, visit [www.aedweb.org](http://www.aedweb.org).