



Jason Weida
Secretary at the Agency for Health Care Administration
Agency for Health Care Administration
2727 Mahan Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308

August 2, 2023

Dear Mr. Weida,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for Florida Medicaid's coverage of comprehensive person-centered obesity care. We urge the Agency for Health Care Administration to expand coverage for the treatment of the chronic disease of obesity in alignment with current clinical standards.

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is the largest non-profit in the United States that provides education, support, and advocacy for people living with obesity. OAC is 80,000 members strong and has 4,293 members living in Florida.

The ADA, the largest non-governmental organization that deals with the treatment and impact of diabetes, represents the 133 million individuals living with diabetes and prediabetes, and has more than 500,000 general members, 15,000 health professional members, and more than one million volunteers.

Obesity is a growing chronic disease in Florida with 28% of the population living with the disease and another 36% with overweight.¹ Altogether, that's 64% of people living in Florida who experience overweight or obesity.

Obesity is a complex, multifactorial, common, serious, relapsing, and costly chronic disease that serves as a major risk factor for developing conditions such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, renal disease, non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, and 13 types of cancer (which make up 40 percent of all cancers diagnosed).²

Obesity is a serious chronic disease that requires treatment and management just like diabetes, cancer, or high blood pressure. Obesity is not a matter of personal choice or moral deficiency. Obesity is often the root cause and driver of other health complications. A recent report found that treating obesity can reduce diabetes (-8.9%), hypertension (-2.3%), heart disease (-2.6%), cancer (-1.3%), and disability (-4.7%) over 10 years in private insurance coverage and Medicare.³ The same assumption may be applied to Medicaid programs.

We urge access to comprehensive person-centered obesity care including intensive behavioral therapy (IBT), (nutrition counseling, behavior modification support), Food & Drug Administration

¹ Obesity Action Coalition, Obesity Fact Sheet, Florida. <https://www.obesityaction.org/wp-content/uploads/Florida2023.pdf>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/obesity/index>. Accessed April 26, 2023

³ Benefits of Medicare Coverage for Weight Loss Drugs. By Alison Sexton Ward, PhD, Bryan Tysinger, PhD, PhuongGiang Nguyen, Dana Goldman, PhD and Darius Lakdawalla, PhD. USC Schaeffer, 2023.

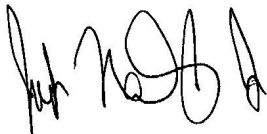
(FDA) approved anti-obesity medications (AOMs) and robust coverage for metabolic/bariatric surgery. We urge Florida Medicaid to take the opportunity to review existing coverage for IBT and bariatric surgery to ensure they meet current clinical standards. We would be happy provide current clinical standards and support your office in updating these coverage policies to address the rising prevalence of obesity in Florida.

The evidence is clear for Medicaid to update coverage of anti-obesity medications (AOMs). Recent clinical guidelines recommend the use of AOMs. The American Diabetes Association's 2023 Standards of Care reviewed the importance of both glycemic control and obesity treatment with AOMs.⁴ The American Gastroenterological Association's obesity management guidelines for adults also recommended the use of AOMs.⁵

Obesity Action Coalition has worked tirelessly to improve the world for people with obesity since its founding in 2005. OAC believes that all individuals should be treated with respect regardless of their weight or size, that those affected by the disease of obesity should have access to safe and effective treatment options in the same way that we treat other chronic diseases. Similarly, the American Diabetes Association, recognizes the strong link between obesity and type 2 diabetes. To help prevent diabetes, we need to treat obesity. ADA strongly supports increasing access to the services and medication health care providers deem necessary for disease prevention and management among their patients.

For questions or requests for additional information, please contact OAC's Director of Policy Strategy & Alliances, Dr. Tracy Zvenyach, PhD, MS, RN, at tzvenyach@obesityaction.org. For ADA, please contact, Veronica DeLagarza, Director of State Government Affairs at vdelagarza@diabetes.org.

Sincerely,



Joe Nadglowski
President and CEO
Obesity Action Coalition



Catherine Ferguson
Vice President, Federal Advocacy
American Diabetes Association

⁴ American Diabetes Association. Diabetes Care 2022;45(Supplement_1):S113–S124. <https://doi.org/10.2337/dc22-S008>

⁵ American Gastroenterological Association. [https://www.gastrojournal.org/article/S0016-5085\(22\)01026-5/fulltext](https://www.gastrojournal.org/article/S0016-5085(22)01026-5/fulltext)

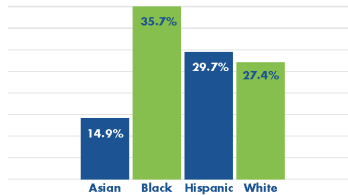
FLORIDA

Obesity Fact Sheet

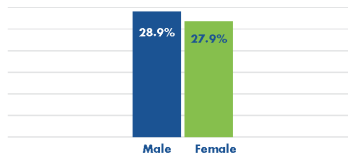


Florida ranks **46th** in states impacted by obesity.

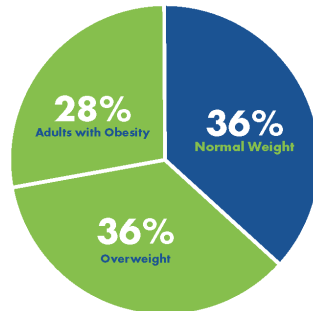
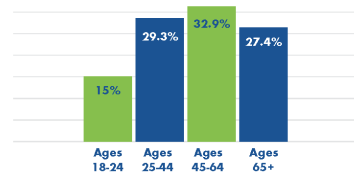
Adults with Obesity by Race & Ethnicity



Adults with Obesity by Gender

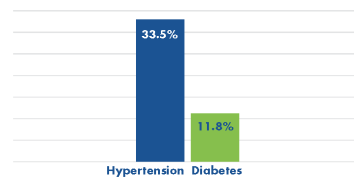


Adults with Obesity by Age Group



Adults with Obesity, Overweight, & Normal Weight

Adults with Hypertension and Diabetes



Impacts of Obesity Across the Country

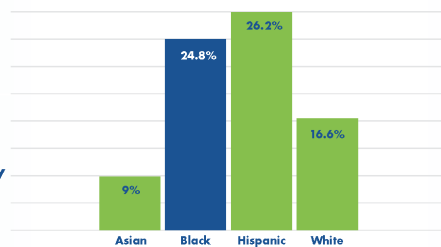


The total cost of obesity in the U.S. is **\$1.7 Trillion**.



Only one state makes weight-based discrimination illegal. Weight bias **negatively impacts those affected financially, mentally, socially and physically.**

Children 2-19 with Obesity by Race & Ethnicity



Healthcare costs are **34% higher** for people with obesity.



Healthcare coverage for obesity and weight management is **inadequate and insufficient**, and varies significantly by each health plan.

OAC's Beliefs and Demands



OAC BELIEVES THAT obesity is a complex chronic disease, not a matter of personal choice or moral deficiency.



OAC DEMANDS THAT people who are affected by obesity deserve access to affordable, individualized medical coverage for science-based treatments in the same way other chronic diseases are managed, and to be treated with the dignity, respect, and equality that is offered to their peers.



Take Action Today!

OAC works to educate the public and key decision makers about weight bias, access to care, and much more! Visit OAC's website today to learn more about how you can be involved!

[ObesityAction.org](https://www.obesityaction.org)

OAC's Action Center provides tools that you can use to take action today!



The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) exists to serve the needs of and give a voice to the individuals affected by the disease of obesity while helping them along their journey toward better health through education, advocacy and support.

References: Trust for America's Health, Centers for Disease Control, Clinical Chemistry, Milken Institute, and Obesity Action Coalition. <https://bit.ly/3llvyDP> | <https://bit.ly/3HTXlxi>

