



**Washington DC, October 7<sup>th</sup>** -- Late Thursday, the independent Institute of Medicine (IOM) released guidelines on the minimum services that health insurance companies will need to offer to be eligible for entry into insurance exchanges. The report did not specify which kinds of benefits—including obesity prevention and treatment services—should be included in plans but rather warned against requiring ample coverage for specialized services. Both the report, which will be submitted to HHS for its consideration, and stakeholder comments will help inform HHS' work on the package during the rulemaking process.

The Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund has actively sought to have comprehensive obesity treatment services included in such a package and has expressed disappointment at the lack of clarity in the report. Now, the Action Fund will turn its attention to HHS, which will seek public input in drafting the essential health benefit package.

“The IOM report places a strong emphasis on affordability, and we urge HHS to bear in mind that obesity prevention and treatment is about exactly that — affordability to taxpayers, and particularly employers, for the long term,” said Stephanie Silverman, a founding director and senior advisor to the Campaign Action Fund. Silverman noted that employers alone experience a more than \$73 billion loss each year due to losses in productivity, absenteeism and medical costs attributed to obesity, according to researchers at Duke University. “Obesity prevention and treatment play a vital role in scaling back the unsustainable health care costs attributed to this epidemic. The Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund looks forward to working with HHS in an effort to advance an essential health benefits package that will help curb one of America’s costliest diseases.”

HHS has said that it has not set a date for issuing rules, though they are expected to come out in 2012. The Institute of Medicine will hold a public release of the report today at 11am. A live audio webcast of this public release will be available at [www.nationalacademies.org](http://www.nationalacademies.org).