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*****For Immediate Release*****

March 8, 2013

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Campaign Lauds New Report Identifying Strategies to Increase Physical Activity Among U.S. Youth

WASHINGTON DC – The Campaign to End Obesity today applauded the release of new recommendations aimed at increasing physical activity for children starting at age 3. The recommendations are part of a midcourse report updating the guidelines for Physical Activity for Americans first published in 2008. The report also states that the levels of physical activity among youth in the United States remains low and that levels of physical activity decline dramatically during adolescence. The midcourse report comes at a time when the United States obesity epidemic continues unabated with two thirds of adults and nearly one in three children overweight or obese.

The report highlights several obstacles to expanding opportunities for physical activity for youth. Significantly, regular physical activity is quite limited in many schools; only 4 percent of elementary schools provide daily PE, 8 percent of middle schools and only 2 percent of high schools. Among the report's recommendation is that a national strategy to increase physical activity should include school settings among all youth.

The prevalence of obesity among U.S. low-income preschool-aged children – recent data indicates that obesity among these preschools remains at around 15 percent – highlights the racial and socio-economic disparities found among all youth and underscores the importance of instilling healthy habits at a young age. The report also calls for prioritizing policy-relevant research aimed at better understanding how to apply preventions and interventions to increase the amount of activity by youth.

“These recommendations demonstrate the need for new thinking and a coordinated effort to bolster and promote policies that facilitate access to healthy lifestyles for all Americans,” said Stephanie Silverman, senior advisor to the Campaign to End Obesity.

The Campaign to End Obesity has been a longtime supporter of policies that expand opportunities to live physically active lifestyles, including many of the recommendations included in the report today. The report comes at a vital time for addressing obesity in America when estimates indicate that 80 percent of adults and almost all youth get less than the recommended amount of physical activity daily. “While the strategies contained in the report are aimed at children’s health, all of us have a stake in reversing the course of the obesity epidemic. Obesity is a very complex disease, with no one cause or treatment. Obesity cannot be fixed through federal policies only – this is a national health emergency and requires the attention of individuals, families, business, government and schools,” said Silverman.

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About the Campaign to End Obesity

The effects of the nation's obesity epidemic are immense: taxpayers, businesses, communities and individuals spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year due to obesity, including an estimated \$168 billion in medical costs. By bringing together leaders from across industry, academia and public health with policymakers and their advisors, the Campaign to End Obesity provides the information and guidance that decision-makers need to make the changes necessary to reverse one of the nation's costliest and most prevalent diseases.