

**TRIMMING THE FAT: A SENSIBLE APPROACH TO THE CHILDHOOD  
OBESITY DIAGNOSIS (AND THE PRESCRIPTION)**

by

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## **Abstract**

A significant amount of information on dietary habits, children's Body Mass Index, exercise patterns, television watching habits and other elements have flown through the popular airwaves and policymaker circles regarding childhood obesity. A 2004 report by the Institute of Medicine depicted the issue as a problem of epic proportions, while other authors have condemned that work and research supporting it as inflated and based upon questionable research methods.

The following work offers a brief review of the literature, research, and policy actions (both Federal and state) taken on childhood obesity to date, and argues that the problem is legitimate, but not on a scope comparable to the solutions offered by the 2004 report. Global warming is used as a means of comparative leverage over the question of exactly where childhood obesity lies in the policy issue life cycle, and analysis is offered regarding the tactical mistakes made by childhood obesity stakeholders in their efforts to achieve both public awareness and policy progress.

The work proceeds to argue that the combination of a well-targeted public relations campaign, combined with structural reforms to the Food Stamp and child nutrition programs, would provide the most appropriate solution to childhood obesity. Research from the Center for Disease Control's VERB campaign earlier this decade is drawn upon to help shape the public relations campaign recommendations, and the chapter on nutrition program reforms argues that these programs should be shifted towards the Food Stamp program model where meals are provided via consumer purchases rather than school kitchen staff. That chapter also suggests allowing states the option of taking part in a pilot program where the state could bring Food Stamps, School

Lunch and School Breakfast-eligible foods under one purchasing regimen and then negotiate with food companies for lower rates, which could account for the increased costs of providing healthier food via these programs. Equally important, it is argued that these recommendations and the necessary funding for them are politically viable.

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