



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES

## **CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUSES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH MAY PROMOTE LEGISLATION TO PREVENT OBESITY AND DISABILITY**

*Public health advocates should collaborate with Congressional caucuses to promote legislation that may prevent obesity and disability.*

A meeting was held by public health advocates to explore the feasibility of educating Congressional caucuses on aspects of public health population-based aspects of obesity.

### **Summary**

Congressional caucuses are groups of members who tend to address special legislative issues. Improved population-based health may be a theme that could unite Congressional caucuses. For instance, the obesity issue cuts across many caucuses and fragments efforts to address the problem. Education on obesity issues through special caucuses could unite special interests to promote a vital public health interest.

Any Congressional caucuses that are formed to improve population-based health by addressing the problem of obesity should be bipartisan. There is need for committed and sustained leadership and recruitment of Congressional staff members to address the public health issue of obesity. Some agenda items for the caucuses may include providing continuity for public health legislative initiatives from one Congress to the next and forming staff briefings to educate members on relevant legislative public health and safety issues.

### **Disability Prevention Issue**

There is evidence that 20% of school children in America have physical and/or mental impairments and their health gets worse as they move through adolescence because they adopt unhealthy lifestyles and risky behavior. Unhealthy lifestyles in children that result in obesity have human costs in their adult lives, because they contribute to a host of chronic health conditions and disability. In addition, obesity has severe economic consequences for overall health costs. Legislative action is needed to ameliorate adverse health conditions of people in America from obesity. One strategy may be educating Congressional staff and members about the magnitude of the stress obesity places on the population-based health status of people in the U.S..

### **Activity**

There have been initiatives through Congressional staff of caucuses for collaboration to systematically address the issue of obesity.

**Principle**

Public health advocates should collaborate with Congressional caucus leaders in an effort to support legislation to prevent obesity which is associated with the prevention of many chronic health conditions and disability.