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**National Governors Association, Washington, DC**

**The Obesity Epidemic: How States Can Trim the ‘Fat.’**

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Obesity is not just a matter of personal health - it's a costly and deadly public health concern that affects economic productivity, state budgets, and personal and family well being. As seen in Figure 1, U.S. adult obesity rates have risen drastically in the last decade, from 12 percent to 20 percent. Thirteen percent of children and adolescents are now overweight or obese, which represents more than a doubling in the last 30 years. Minority groups and those with less education and lower income are much more likely to be overweight and obese. Nearly 30 percent of African-American adults and 23 percent of Hispanic adults are obese. One in five Hispanic and African-American children are overweight. There has been a ten-fold increase in the number of children with adult-onset diabetes in the last five years. The results of this ongoing problem are additional absence from work and school, lost productivity, and higher healthcare costs. At-risk and overweight children increasingly suffer from depression, anxiety, social angst, diabetes and other health problems, and are more likely to grow up to be obese adults.

States are paying heavily for obesity and its care - currently, four million obese children are Medicaid beneficiaries and an unknown number of adult Medicaid beneficiaries are obese. There is much work to be done to significantly improve health and the associated healthcare costs. Fortunately, states are leading the way in addressing this problem. Much of the death, disease, and disability associated with obesity can be prevented through state actions to increase physical activity, promote better diet, and improve prevention and treatment available through healthcare systems. This issue brief focuses on programs and policies that states can implement to address obesity and its causes