

Weight Bias and Stigma

An Educational Resource for Pediatric Healthcare Providers

What is Weight Bias?

Weight bias refers to **negative attitudes and stereotypes** about individuals based on their weight, such as viewing people in larger bodies as lazy, lacking self-discipline, or unhealthy, regardless of their actual health or behavior.

What is Weight Stigma?

Weight stigma is the **manifestation of these biases** into discriminatory actions and behaviors.



How do weight bias and stigma impact children?

Children who experience weight-based discrimination are more likely to experience:

Low Self-Esteem

Anxiety

Depression

Negative Body Image

**Suicidal Thoughts
& Behaviors**

**Lower
Quality of Life**

How can pediatric healthcare providers care for children with obesity?

1. Identify your own biases by asking yourself these questions:

- “How do I feel when I work with patients of different body sizes?”
- “Do I make assumptions regarding a person’s character, intelligence, abilities, health status, or behaviors based on their weight?”
- “What stereotypes do I have about persons with obesity?”
- “How do my patients affected by obesity feel when they leave my office? Do they feel confident, empowered, or otherwise?”



2. Establish a safe and respectful environment by following these practices:

- Allow your patients to choose to have “blind” weights (not showing them the number on the scale).
- Ensure that scales are not in highly-trafficked areas to create privacy.
- Be mindful of including numbers of certain metrics (weight, BMI, etc.) on aftercare summary forms.
- Ask permission to discuss weight
- Set up waiting and examination rooms that accommodate patients with obesity
- Encourage patients to focus on making healthy changes for reasons related to well-being rather than weight outcomes
- Use person-first language
- Be mindful of nonverbal communication

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