



## **National Association of Hispanic Nurses**

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### **Position Statement on Obesity among Latino Youths**

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The National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN) represents over 110,000 Hispanic/Latino registered nurses in the United States. Hispanic/Latino nurses play an integral role not only as health providers, but also as navigators and primary advocates for the diverse Hispanic/Latino population in the U.S.

Child obesity is an epidemic in the United States. One third of U.S. children are overweight or obese. According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the current generation of children will be the first in America to have a shorter life span than their parents' generation (Olshansky et al., 2005). This dismal prediction was supported by a study from the Institute of Medicine (IOM), which reported that two thirds of adults and one-third of children are obese or overweight. Of

particular concern, Hispanics have a 21% higher obesity prevalence compared to non-Hispanic Whites. This is a major concern for our Hispanic children because being overweight during childhood increases the risk of developing many chronic diseases, including high blood pressure, heart disease, type -2 diabetes, certain cancers, and stroke, thus continuing to contribute to the gap in Hispanic health disparities into the future.

In January, 2010, First Lady Michelle Obama launched the "Let's Move" initiative to promote physical and emotional health. She stated that everyone has a role to play in reducing childhood obesity.

In response, NAHN launched the NAHN Muevete USA™ Program. The NAHN Muevete USA™ Program which aims to prevent and reduce childhood obesity, was implemented throughout the United States. It supports the mission of NAHN, which is to improve the quality of health and nursing care of the Hispanic communities throughout the United States. The Hispanic community is very young in age: thus, there is a great need to educate Hispanic youth in ways to improve their lives now to ensure healthy lifestyles in the future.

The causes of childhood obesity are multi-factorial. Obesity in children and adolescents is generally caused by a lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating. Genetics and social factors,

such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, media, marketing, and physical environment all influence obesity. Targeting one factor may not make a significant impact on this growing issue of obesity in children. NAHN will target the two key strategies of making physical activity and selecting healthy, easy food options. The Muevete USA™ program teaches the children and their families how to make these strategies a routine part of life.

NAHN is taking a leadership role by targeting underserved areas to address the obesity epidemic in the United States.

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**About the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN)**

NAHN is actively involved in issues affecting Hispanic nurses and the health of Hispanic communities on local, state, regional and national levels. The organization is committed to work toward providing equal access to education, professional and economic opportunities for Hispanic nurses and to improving the health and nursing care for Hispanic consumers.