Stigma Experienced by Children and Adolescents with Obesity

Society believes weight stigma and shame can motivate people to lose weight. But, weight stigma is harmful to both emotional and physical health.

Health Consequences of Weight Stigma

- Decreased Exercise and Physical Activity
- Emotional and Psychological Effects
- Social Isolation and Academic Outcomes
- Unhealthy Eating Behaviors
- Worsening Obesity

Although pediatricians focus their efforts on improving weight-related health of youth, there should also be a focus on weight stigma.

Improving Clinical Practice

- Be a role model - share best practices for nonbiased behaviors.
- Could we talk about your weight today?
- Pay attention to language.
- Use an empathetic approach for clinical documentation.
- Use patient-centered empowering counseling techniques.
- Create a supportive clinical environment.
- Perform behavioral health screening.

Advocate Against Weight Stigma

- Schools
  Promote antibullying policies to protect vulnerable students.
- Youth-Targeted Media
  Portray individuals with obesity responsibly and respectfully.
- Provider Training
  Address weight stigma in ongoing training and education for medical students, residents, and practicing physicians.
- Parents
  Empower families and patients to manage and address weight-related health issues in schools, communities, and homes.

The American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Obesity and The Obesity Society offers the following recommendations for pediatricians to address weight stigma in different settings.