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Strategic plan targets diabetes, obesity

The 2009 Oregon Legislature will consider a strategic plan to slow an alarming acceleration in the rate of diabetes caused by obesity in Oregon. The plan arises from House Bill 3486, which in 2007 declared that diabetes linked to obesity constitutes an emergency in the state.

On Friday Dr. Bruce Goldberg, director of the Oregon Department of Human Services, presents the plan to the 2008 Pacific Northwest Diabetes Health Summit hosted by the OHSU Harold Schnitzer Diabetes Health Center.

A 30-member advisory committee spent seven months laying out the strategic plan which includes a work plan for the next three legislative biennia. The recommendations include:

- Dedicating significant funding to obesity prevention and education efforts in communities throughout the state;
- Giving serious consideration to addressing underlying causes of health inequities;
- Providing consumers with access to easily available information to make healthy food choices;
- Conducting careful planning to enact a "healthy schools act;"
- Making health a priority consideration in land-use and transportation policy and funding;
- Improving quality of medical care through effective health care reform measures.

Rep. Scott Bruun, chief sponsor of the bill, called the measure an important step in recognizing the emergency in Oregon related to obesity and diabetes.

"I am pleased with the recommendations from the HB 3486 Advisory Committee and want to thank everyone who contributed to this effort," Rep. Bruun said. "The next steps won't be easy, but if we are committed to a healthier Oregon, we can make a difference for people suffering from diabetes and prevent new cases from ever occurring."

Committee members found that success will require changes in all environments where children and adults work, learn and live and that healthy food and opportunities for physical activity must be available to all.

"These recommendations are practical and effective and will be key to helping Oregonians fight obesity that leads to serious diseases like diabetes," Dr. Goldberg said. "The workgroup has charted a path to ensure Oregonians have the information and support they need to stay healthy."

The advisory committee, chaired by Sally Norby, executive director of the American Diabetes Association in Oregon and Southwest Washington, concluded that the epidemic of obesity and diabetes is a public health crisis which needs immediate attention at the highest levels.

"I applaud the Oregon legislature for passing House Bill 3486 and for taking Oregon's twin epidemics of diabetes and obesity seriously," Norby said. "With thanks to the Department of Human Services and the advisory committee, we have taken an important first step toward slowing the rate of diabetes in our state."

In making its recommendations the committee took into account statistics showing that:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 3 children born in 2000 will develop diabetes if conditions don't change.
- About 262,000 Oregon adults already have diabetes, a 62 percent increase from 1995.
- 6,900 Oregon adults develop diabetes each year.
- \$1.4 billion annually are spent to treat diabetes in Oregon.
- 1.7 million Oregon adults are obese or overweight, putting them at high risk of developing diabetes or developing severe complications if they already have diabetes. This number is a 59 percent increase from 1995.
- A startling 37,000 adult Oregonians become obese each year.

-Oregonians with low incomes and those who are African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic/Latino are more commonly affected by diabetes and obesity.

-Many Oregon children are overweight and some even have Type 2 diabetes (the kind related to obesity in adults), a previously unheard of phenomenon.

Dr. Mel Kohn, acting director of the Oregon State Public Health Division, said the increasing trends in obesity and diabetes are unacceptable.

“If the epidemic of obesity continues unchecked in Oregon, our children will likely have worse health than their parents or their grandparents,” he said. “We need to reverse the trend of increasing rates of obesity and diabetes if we are to provide a healthy future for our state.”

A full copy of the Strategic Plan to Slow the Rate of Diabetes in Oregon can be found on the Web at www.healthoregon.org/diabetes

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