

2012 Bateman Case Study Competition Project Brief: Battling Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity has tripled in the past 30 years. Today, one in three children is obese. The issue has become a significant public health problem in the United States; many health officials and experts consider childhood obesity an epidemic.

The primary causes for childhood obesity are well documented: Children and teenagers are not engaging enough in healthy eating (food choices and portion sizes) or enough physical activity. Statistics explaining this trend include:

- According to National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), approximately 17% (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents aged 2-19 years are obese.
- According to research cited in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45 (2009) S1-S5, "U.S. children and adolescents experience an average 'energy gap' (i.e., surplus of energy intake over energy expenditure of 165 calories per day over the period from the 1988 and 1994 (National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, NHANES) to the 1999-2000 NHANES surveys, leading to an excess 10 pounds of body weight for all adolescents, 1 pound per year, on average. Overweight adolescents consumed an average of 700-1,000 more calories per day, which resulted in an average weight gain of 58 extra pounds beyond that associated with normal growth, almost six pounds per year."
- According to a 2000 School Health Policies and Programs Study, only 8% of elementary schools, 6.4% of middle schools and 5.8% of high schools provide daily physical education to all of its students. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one fourth of children in America spend four hours or more watching television daily and only 27% of students in grades 9 to 12 engage in moderate physical activity at least 30 minutes a day on five or more days of the week.

With the lack of education about the need for healthy eating and physical activity, the nation remains ignorant of the numerous repercussions associated with rising childhood obesity rates. Sedentary lifestyles and poor eating habits are creating a generation of Americans who will face very serious health consequences both in the near-term and long-term.

The consequences of childhood obesity are many, including:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Increased risk of type 2 diabetes
- Breathing problems
- Joint problems

Overweight youth are more likely to become overweight adults, increasing the risk of more serious, long-term health problems. Additionally, obese youth are at greater risk of social and psychological problems, such as discrimination and poor self-esteem, which can continue into adulthood.

The 2012 Bateman Case Study Competition goals are to increase awareness among children, teenagers and their parents of the serious short and long-term consequences of obesity, inform them of the steps they can take to adopt a healthier lifestyle and provide incentives to take action now.

MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS ISSUE

- Children just learning about healthy lifestyles
- Overweight and obese children and teenagers
- Parents of children and teenagers
- Educators
- Medical professionals (doctors, nurses, nutritionists, etc.)
- Medical insurance companies
- Agencies/organizations advocating for a healthy lifestyle

WHO IS THE “CLIENT”?

There is no client-of-record for this competition – this is part of the challenge in this year’s Bateman Competition. Teams will need to identify and partner with one or more local organizations with similar missions and goals to create a local cause-related public relations campaign. The campaign should aim to reverse the rising trend of childhood obesity in a sustainable way by advocating for healthy lifestyles through education, outreach and other tactics.

However, PRSSA still seeks a sponsor/client aligned with this project brief. If a client is secured, PRSSA will make a formal announcement before November 4 to alert the membership and Advisers. The overall subject matter will not change, although the sponsor/client will have the opportunity to tailor the brief to their specific needs.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Addressing this issue in your community involves the most fundamental challenge to public relations: to understand and effect change in human behavior. A successful campaign involves:

- Research to define and determine the extent of the problem and the reasons for unhealthy lifestyles in children in the targeted community.
- Planning to identify objectives and primary audiences, explaining why change is needed, and influencing these audiences to take action.
- Campaign development to increase public awareness of the problem and potential consequences, inform about and promote the adoption of healthy attitudes and behaviors, and begin a reversal of this unhealthy trend.
- Evaluation to determine the impact of the campaign on key audiences.

The judges will understand that a short-term campaign will not and cannot completely resolve the issue. However, they will assess its initial progress and the promise it holds for future outcomes.

Your PRSSA Chapter and Bateman team can make an important contribution reversing this national problem and getting children, teenagers and parents back on the road to healthy lifestyles. Submit your Intent-To-Enter form now and become a part of this significant Bateman Competition!