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## Kaine releases obesity report

by Ashlee Cossaboon  
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Governor Tim Kaine released a preliminary report critiquing and examining the Virginia Department of Health's Commonwealth's Healthy Approach and Mobilization Plan for Inactivity, Obesity and Nutrition Oct. 31. The CHAMPION program began in 2004, and regional meetings were held from March to August 2005 to gauge the success of the program. More than 900 people on behalf of 250 organizations attended the nine public hearings to propose solutions to obesity.

“Almost 24 percent of Virginians are obese, and 60 percent of adult Virginians are classified as overweight, making the Commonwealth one of the states with the fastest-growing waistlines,” Kaine said. “Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States. It increases the risk of many chronic diseases, including Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and several types of cancer. This report is an important step as we work towards a comprehensive plan to reduce obesity and the health problems associated with it.”

A study conducted by the American Heart Association in 2004 concluded that of Americans over 20 years of age, 136.5 million are overweight or obese. The study also revealed that obesity was associated with 112,000 excess deaths, to be compared with 34,000 excess deaths related to underweight people.

The CHAMPION Summary Report states, “The CHAMPION process was not designed with the intention of being a scientific study; rather, a means of gathering information to be used in the creation of a plan to help reduce or eliminate obesity in Virginia.”

Representatives ranked over 4,500 factors they believed caused obesity. They ranked solutions to fighting the problem. The participants concluded that the four main solutions were media intervention, nutrition education, community involvement and public policy.

“In a 2004 study performed by the University of Baltimore, researchers looked at what states are doing to treat obesity as a threat to public health. The study revealed that Virginia received a “D” for the State’s efforts to control obesity and an “F” in the State’s efforts to control childhood obesity,” stated the CHAMPION Summary Report. “In 2003, Virginia’s direct obesity attributable health care costs topped \$1.6 billion.”

Some programs that were considered successful were the Virginia Head Start program and am

Moving, I am Learning™ designed to appeal to preschool students and “Girls on the Run,” which encourages Newport News public schools’™ female students to take part in physical activity.

For the complete report, visit <http://www.vahealth.org/wic/champion.htm> and click the CHAMPION Summary Report link to open the PDF file.

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