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**News Release**

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## **Obesity Epidemic Climbing Statewide Overweight Young Adults At Increased Risk**

Austin (TX) – New data released today from the Texas Health Institute and Methodist Healthcare Ministries indicates more than 15 million Texans will become obese by 2040 if obesity prevention efforts are not adopted immediately.

The data report, created by State Demographer Dr. Karl Eschbach, analyzes population trends and rates of obese adults and forecasts over a 35-year period the anticipated number of obese Texans.

The report notes that while dramatic obesity increases are noted in all ethnic and age groups, obesity rate increases in young adults have risen more than 10% in just 7 years. As this population ages, they face a greater risk of additional weight gain and the complications of chronic diseases that accompany obesity, like heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and respiratory ailments.

“The rates of obesity among Latinos and among the elderly are staggering and these are the fastest growing populations in our state. The consequences for our health care system in treating the resulting complications of obesity will be a great concern if we do not act now with effective prevention efforts,” said Camille D. Miller, President & CEO of Texas Health Institute.

The data projections may prove especially helpful in planning obesity prevention efforts in communities particularly burdened by obesity and resulting health care costs. The projections indicate the highest rates of obesity in border and rural counties where insurance coverage and access to physician care already exist.

“We have seen an increase in the number of people in the communities we serve through our own clinics, our funded partners and our health education programs, that have chronic illnesses stemming from obesity.

-add one-

While we know obesity rates are alarmingly high in our state, there is a dearth of data at the county level that helps us to understand the true scope of it. We commissioned this study to help us understand what we're dealing with at a regional level and to persuade our lawmakers to develop policies that will reduce the impact this epidemic will have on our state," said Kevin C. Moriarty, Methodist Healthcare Ministries President & CEO. "Our health systems and community clinics do not have the capacity to adequately deal with these problems now—if trends continue they will not ever be able to deal with the shear volume of people affected by obesity, creating a greater strain on our state's resources."

"Texas ranks as the 14<sup>th</sup> most obese state in the nation, but we don't have to stay that way," said Miller. "Obesity is something we have the power to change."

The obesity projections are available online at [www.texashealthinstitute.org](http://www.texashealthinstitute.org) and at [www.mhm.org](http://www.mhm.org).

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**About Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas** - Methodist Healthcare Ministries (MHM), based in San Antonio, is a faith-based, 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization providing care through health-related programs and services to the least served throughout South Texas. MHM also partners with other established organizations that are fulfilling the needs of the underserved in local communities. It supports policy advocacy and programs that promote wholeness of body, mind and spirit. To learn more about MHM, please visit the website at [www.mhm.org](http://www.mhm.org) or call 800-959-6673.

**About Texas Health Institute** - Texas Health Institute (THI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to finding feasible solutions to Texas' health policy problems. The mission of THI is to provide leadership to improve the health of Texans and their communities through education, research and health policy development. By providing a non-biased, non-partisan approach to the overall health and well-being of Texans, THI is able to create sound strategies and viable solutions to some of our state's most pressing health issues. To learn more about THI, please visit the website at [www.texashealthinstitute.org](http://www.texashealthinstitute.org) or call 512-279-3910.