

Dear Friends,

It is unfortunate that some misinformation has been circulated and we simply would like to correct the record.

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) does not have any ongoing partnership with George Washington University's program, Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Now Alliance. In light of the overwhelming national obesity conversation, we contacted STOP because of our concern that media portrayals of dramatic, quick-fix weight loss could lead to unhealthy weight-loss behaviors that negatively impact health and could potentially trigger an eating disorder. We quickly learned that STOP shared our concerns about the dangerous ways the media communicates about weight and health, inappropriately equating body size with health status and stigmatizing those who do not fit our culture's impossible beauty standards. We decided to jointly host an event in order to have an honest dialogue between leaders in our respective fields as to effectively communicate about weight, size, and health. We recognized an opportunity to learn, collaborate, and pursue areas where our concerns intersect.

Our first panel discussion, *Weight Matters: Effectively Communicating About Health and Weight*, was held in May of 2010 in New York City. Dr. Ovidio Bermudez represented NEDA on this panel. A lot came out of the panel, including some points on which NEDA and STOP found areas of agreement. For example, the obesity field experts on the panel also did not support the use of Body Mass Index (BMI) for individual assessment because it should only be used as an epidemiological tool, or in consultation with a knowledgeable doctor who takes the individual's unique and holistic health factors into consideration. In addition, we found that both sides were frustrated by inaccurate depictions of the health problems our organizations work on behalf of. Whether in regards to obesity or eating disorders, we believe that our media should be focusing on health indicators, *not* body shape and size. Furthermore, both populations face discrimination and have problems seeking health coverage for care. While these are some of the ways we found that STOP could be a valued partner in achieving specific reforms, NEDA's position remains that simply being "overweight" (by whatever measure used) does not mean an individual has an illness.

The first discussion sparked so much interest from the audience that we were then invited for a follow up in Washington D.C. entitled *Pounds and Policy: Obesity and Eating Disorders Roundtable*. Chevese Turner, the President of the Binge Eating Disorder Association (BEDA) spoke on behalf of the eating disorders populations at the roundtable, representing both of our organizations. Recently, we were invited to participate in a webinar, "Are Words Weighing Us Down?," and Dr. Ovidio Bermudez again agreed to speak on behalf of the eating disorders field, recognizing an opportunity to offer our perspective to a broader audience.

That has been the extent of our work with STOP. We are grateful for their participation in this joint effort, but we have no future plans to collaborate at this time. We have done what we set out to do. In the event that our advocacy agendas find an area of commonality that would be helpful to both of our constituents in the future, we would certainly consider any partnership that benefited those who have been affected by eating disorders. Thank you to all who contacted NEDA to share your thoughts with us—we always welcome your calls and emails. We take all concerns very seriously, as our purpose is to best serve those who struggle with eating disorders, and to provide support and resources for their loved ones.

Sincerely,

Lynn Grefe, President and Chief Executive Officer