

## Employer Resource: Weight Bias

**What is weight bias?** Weight bias is negative beliefs or attitudes that affect interactions and lead to stigma, rejection, prejudice, and discrimination. It can be verbal, physical, or relational, and can be conveyed in subtle or overt ways.

**Why does it matter?** Weight bias is evident in health care, education, the media, interpersonal relationships, and employment. In a recent national survey, the prevalence of weight discrimination was comparable to racial discrimination.

**Who is at-risk?** Women are more vulnerable than men, and weight bias increases with BMI. Weight bias in employment is more common than gender or age bias.

**What are examples of weight bias in the workplace?** Obese job applicants are ascribed more negative attributes compared to normal weight individuals including work-related traits (e.g., poor self-discipline, personal hygiene, and role models, less supervisory potential, ambition, and productivity) and personality traits (e.g., weak willed, emotionally unstable, lazy, less competent, sloppy, and less conscientious).

**Employer weight bias may manifest as prejudice against obese employees.**

- Less likely to be hired (especially for jobs requiring face-to-face contact)
- Lower wages compared to normal weight employees
- More discipline from employers for inappropriate work behavior
- Wrongful job termination

**What are the consequences?** In addition to the inequities listed above, weight bias fosters blame and intolerance that impairs quality of life and poses serious psychological, emotional, and health-related consequences for obese individuals.

**How can you reduce it?**

1. Identify your own potential biases. Remember that overweight and obese individuals are frequent targets of stigma, and they have likely made previous attempts to lose weight.
2. Increase awareness of weight-based stigmatization through education (e.g., what is it and how to report it), include “weight” in anti-bullying policies, and address instances of weight-based bullying promptly and effectively.
3. Address weight as part of diversity training: weight stigma is legitimate, unacceptable, and harmful.
4. Eliminate inequities for overweight/obese employees through sensitivity training for hiring staff/managers, ensure fair interviewing/hiring/promotion practices for qualified candidates (regardless of weight), develop and implement clear non-discrimination policies that include obesity.

For more information on weight bias, please visit  
[www.YaleRuddCenter.org](http://www.YaleRuddCenter.org)



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