

INTRODUCTION



The Comptroller's 2007 report *Counting Costs and Calories: Measuring the Cost*

of Obesity to Texas Employers examined the financial impact of obesity on Texas employers — and found it to be significant. Since then, the situation has only worsened. Obesity is an increasingly common and increasingly serious malady in Texas.

In 2009, 29.5 percent of all Texas adults were clinically obese, well ahead of the national rate of 27.1 percent.⁹ In the same year, *two-thirds* of all adult Texans were overweight or obese.

Texas employers pay a high price for the obesity epidemic. The Comptroller's 2007 study estimated the costs to Texas businesses associated with obesity-related health care, absenteeism, disability and decreased productivity at \$3.3 billion annually. **According to new estimates, that amount has almost tripled, to \$9.5 billion in 2009.**

The Texas state demographer projects that, if current trends continue at the pace of the last 10 years, by 2030 36.7 percent of Texas adults will be obese, 36.4 percent will be overweight and only 26.9 percent will be at normal weight.¹⁰ **New Comptroller estimates show that obesity could cost Texas businesses \$32.5 billion annually by 2030.**

Obesity also is a factor in the rising cost of health care and insurance. About 9.1 percent of all U.S. medical spending and nearly 13 percent of all private insurance spending can be attributed to obesity.¹¹

In recognition of obesity's impact on the workplace and the bottom line, many companies have started employee health and wellness programs to reduce absenteeism, lower insurance costs and improve productivity and morale. These programs produce a positive return on the investment needed to create them.¹²

Governments at the federal, state and local levels also are taking action, and Texas has become a national leader in this fight. It was among the first states to set nutritional standards for school lunches, breakfasts and snacks that exceed the federal standards, and to set standards for foods sold in school à la carte lines, stores and vending machines. In addition, physical education programs in Texas schools have received attention and some extra funding to work the other side of the "fewer calories, more activity" equation.

