CREATING A WELCOMING AND
SAFE OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

Ensure that your clinic or medical office is well-equipped to accommodate patients with larger body sizes. Providing a safe and welcoming environment can improve patient care, reduce patient experiences of stigma, and eliminate unnecessary barriers that may otherwise deter patients from seeking care.

**Equipment and Facilities**

It is important that appropriate equipment is available to accommodate and accurately assess patients with high weight. This includes the following:

- Large, sturdy chairs and/or benches in waiting areas and examination rooms that can accommodate patients and visitors with large body sizes
- Sturdy step stools in examination rooms
- Large examination tables with proper width and weight capacity
- Extra-large examination gowns in every examination room
- Extra-large adult-sized blood pressure cuffs in every examination room
- High capacity scales that can support >500 lbs
- Extra long phlebotomy needles and tourniquets
- Floor-mounted toilets
- Sturdy grab bars in bathrooms
- Doors and hallways that accommodate large size wheelchairs, walkers, scooters

Relevant Published Research Citations
Sensitive and Respectful Weighing Procedures

For many patients, being weighed creates feelings of anxiety, shame, and/or embarrassment. Additionally, patients may have had stigmatizing healthcare experiences in the past and feel uncomfortable being weighed. It is important to approach weighing procedures in a sensitive and respectful manner.

- Consider whether it is necessary to measure the patient’s weight by reviewing his/her medical chart.
- Ask the patient’s permission to be weighed, by asking “May we measure your weight today?”
- Be respectful if the patient decides not to be weighed.
- Ensure that the scale is located in a private area, where the patient can be weighed in privacy.
- For patients who give permission to be weighed, offer them the option for blind weighing (facing away from the scale) if they prefer.
- Record the patient’s weight without judgment (e.g., no negative comments or facial expressions)
- Ask the patient whether or not they would like to be informed of how much they weigh.
- Ensure that the healthcare team is trained on implementing sensitive weighing procedures.

Staff Training and Education

Training and educating providers and staff about weight stigma and obesity as a chronic disease can help minimize weight stigma in healthcare encounters.

- Provide in-service education for all personnel (healthcare providers, medical assistants, front desk employees, and back office workers).
- Provide training on strategies to eliminate stigma and foster supportive and respectful communication with patients of all body sizes.
### Clinic Assessment Checklist

#### Waiting Room and Common Areas

- Large, sturdy chairs (preferably armless) or benches that can accommodate patients and visitors with large body sizes
- Doors and hallways that accommodate large size wheelchairs, walkers, scooters
- Weight-sensitive reading materials in waiting area
- Bathrooms that are wheelchair accessible
- Floor-mounted/pedestal toilets in bathrooms
- Sturdy grab bars in bathrooms

#### Examination Room

- Sturdy step stools
- Large sturdy chairs
- Large examination tables with proper width and weight capacity
- Extra-large examination gowns
- Extra-large adult-sized arm and thigh blood pressure cuffs
- Extra long phlebotomy needles and tourniquets

#### Scale

- Accurate, high capacity scale that can support >500 lbs
- Wide platform with handles for support during weighing
- Accessible for patients with disabilities
- Situated in a private area
- Staff trained in sensitive weighing procedures

#### Staff Training

- Healthcare providers assess their own potential for weight bias
- Staff is educated about the needs of patients with obesity to promote their understanding, sensitivity and respect of this patient population
- Office staff is trained on strategies to eliminate stigma and foster supportive and respectful communication with patients of all body sizes