

## PART H. APPENDIX 4. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

As a government advisory committee, the Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee (Committee) is required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act to function with an open process in which the public may participate. This was accomplished through public submission of written comments and oral testimony given to the Committee.

*Federal Register* notices alerted the public to Committee meetings held in-person and/or by videocast. In these notices and at the meetings, the public was invited and reminded to submit their comments to an online database at <https://health.gov/paguidelines>. The public comments process opened on June 28, 2016 and closed on November 10, 2017.

A public comments database was developed for the 2018 Committee process based on the structure and content used for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.

### Topics for Comments

When submitting comments, the public selected one or more topic areas to categorize their comment. Initially, these topic areas were:

- PA prescription: dose/volume/intensity/frequency
- All-cause mortality
- Cardiorespiratory health (CVD, asthma, stroke, etc.)
- Metabolic health (metabolic syndrome and diabetes)
- Energy balance (weight management)
- Musculoskeletal health (arthritis, scoliosis, back pain, delayed-onset muscle soreness, etc.)
- Functional health (ability to perform activities of daily living; prevention of disability with aging)
- Cancer
- Mental Health (diagnosed)
- Youth: ages 6-17
- Youth: ages 3-6
- Adverse Events (injury, air quality, etc.)
- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- Individuals with disabilities
- Racial/ethnic diversity
- Sedentary behavior
- Cognition across the lifespan (youth and older adults)

After the Committee's first public meeting, during which they formed topic-specific Subcommittees, the topic areas were amended to align with these Subcommittees. The new list included:

- Aging
- Brain Health (mental health, cognition, etc.)
- Cancer – Primary Prevention
- Cardiometabolic Health and Weight Management
- Exposure/Dose Response of Physical Activity
- Individuals with Chronic Conditions
- Promotion of Physical Activity (behavior change)
- Sedentary Behavior
- Youth: ages 3-6
- Youth: ages 6-17
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Pregnant Women
- Racial/Ethnic Diversity
- Miscellaneous

## Guidelines for Submissions

The Committee requested that submitted comments define terms as specifically as possible. For example, when referring to physical activity, the Committee asked that the comment specify the type (e.g., walking, jumping rope, or biking) and intensity (e.g., light, moderate, or vigorous) of activity to ensure the comment was accurately interpreted.

Individual submissions were allowed to include up to five attachments, such as journal articles, reports, and other scientific material for the Committee to consider.

Additional guidelines were provided for public comments:

1. **Comments must be related to the stated purpose of the request.** Public comments are requested for specific purposes, which are stated at the top of online comment collection forms. Comments unrelated to the stated purpose will not be published.
2. **Comments must be suitable for online publication.** Comments that contain profanity, inappropriate images, copyrighted materials, or that are intended to defame specific individuals (i.e., slander or libel) or groups of individuals (i.e., derogatory or discriminatory remarks) will not be published.
3. **Comments must not contain information that is exempt from public disclosure.** Public availability of comments is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). FOIA exempts certain types of information from public disclosure. Comments that contain information that is exempt under FOIA will not be published. For more information about FOIA exemptions, visit: <https://www.foia.gov/faq.html#exemptions>.

For all public comments, submitters were required to provide the following information: topic area(s), the comment itself (5,000 character limit), any accompanying attachments, full name (with option to make it public), affiliation, and organization. They also were required to provide their email address, phone number, and zip code, but this information was not included when the comment was posted on the public comments page at <https://health.gov/paguidelines>. Submitters were given the option to provide their business or academic credentials and postal address, including country. This information was not posted on the public website. After the comment was submitted, confirmation was provided to the submitter by e-mail.

Federal staff reviewed each submitted comment. Comments not posted were either: (1) duplicate submission of another comment posted by the same submitter, or (2) comments that did not pertain to the Committee.

All submitted comments that pertained to the Committee were provided to the Committee members and published online. Copies of all submitted comments were retained by the coordinating federal office, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. With the exception of comments that are subject to FOIA exemptions, comments that were not published online because they did not meet the stated guidelines are available for public inspection upon request by contacting [odphpinfo@hhs.gov](mailto:odphpinfo@hhs.gov).

A total of 131 comments were submitted and 109 were relevant to the Committee's work.

The majority of comments submitted fell into these topic areas: Promotion of Physical Activity and Youth (ages 3-6 and 6-17). However, comments were received in all 14 topic areas and covered a wide range of issues.

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In addition to written comments, oral comments from two individuals were presented at the October 2016 public meeting. These individuals each provided 3 minutes or less of testimony before the Committee, and they submitted a brief outline of their comments when they registered to participate in the comment session.

The oral and written comments provided by the public were valuable in that they helped the Committee gather background information and understand public and professional perceptions. Comments from the public brought new issues to light, as well as new approaches to current issues and emerging evidence. They also highlighted and ensured consideration of topics deemed to be important by the submitters, who represented a variety of backgrounds and focus areas. The public comments will remain archived at <https://health.gov/paguidelines>.