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**For Immediate Release**

## **HIPCARE TO LAUNCH NEW INITIATIVE TO FIGHT CHILDHOOD OBESITY AT MARCH 18 HEALTH FAIR**

***Atlanta Families Invited for Free Health Screenings, Help in Weight Management***

**Atlanta, Ga., March 18, 2012** – The Health Institute for Preventive Care, Access, Research and Education (HIP CARE), an Atlanta-based, nonprofit organization committed to improving health outcomes, will kick off a new grassroots coalition on March 18 aimed at reversing the childhood obesity epidemic in Georgia.

HIP CARE will launch the new initiative during at its free health expo on Sunday, March 18 that will be held from 2pm- 6pm at the Berean Outreach Ministry Center, 312 Hamilton E. Homes Drive in Atlanta. Free health and fitness assessments will be offered to all attendees.

Representatives of the Aetna Foundation will be on hand for the launch and present a \$50,000 grant in support of the initiative.

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The new program, called Prevent and Reverse Obesity and Other-diseases via Families or PROOF, will enlist a coalition of organizations, businesses and citizens to advocate for public policies to reverse the spread of the obesity epidemic and its related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.

“The state of Georgia has the second highest rate of childhood obesity in the nation, and African-American and Hispanic children are at highest risk of being overweight or obese. Childhood obesity is a major public health problem that requires a public policy remedy, not unlike child safety seat belts laws of years ago that were enacted to protect children,” said Dr. Debbie Wallace, Fellow, Satcher Health Leadership Institute, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Director of HIPCARE. “We need everyone to work together to address this threat to our children.”

HIPCARE will partner with local businesses, farmers, schools, neighborhood associations, nonprofit organizations and the faith-based community to determine existing resources and evidence-based solutions that can be implemented in the local communities, such as increasing the availability of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables and safe places to be physically active. The coalition will lay the foundation for addressing state and local policies that can have long-term, positive effect on the prevention of childhood obesity among the region’s most vulnerable populations.

“Childhood is a critical period for developing a predisposition to lifelong obesity,” said Sharon Dalton, vice president of the Aetna Foundation and director of its regional grant making.

“Data show that upwards of three-quarters of obese children become obese adults. Obesity’s impact on overall health can be devastating. We are pleased to support HIPCARE’s effort to engage a broad section of Atlanta’s community to address this difficult health issue,” she said.

At the March 18 health expo, attendees can receive complete health and fitness assessments, including blood pressure testing, diabetes and cholesterol screenings, and

tests for cardiovascular, strength, endurance and feasibility. At the end, participants will be given a personalized, written assessment and counseling by a physician or health care professional, along with referrals as appropriate. Participants with a high body mass index will be invited to enroll in HIPCARE's weight-management program and join its ongoing support groups, cooking classes and exercise activities.

People are encouraged to wear comfortable exercise attire to participate fully in the health and fitness tests.

### **About HIPCARE**

HIPCARE was formed in 2001 from a grant which established a partnership with over 50 local churches across different denominations to address health disparities. Training and support is provided to faith-based organizations on an on-going basis. Responding to the needs, in 2009 the Healthy Life Corps was formalized, comprised of hundreds of health and non-health volunteers enabling the Health Institute to achieve its goal of reaching the most vulnerable populations with free health care provided at large community events. For more information, visit [www.hipcare.org](http://www.hipcare.org)

### **About the Aetna Foundation**

The Aetna Foundation, Inc. is the independent charitable and philanthropic arm of Aetna Inc. Since 1980, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have contributed \$394 million in grants and sponsorships, including \$15.6 million in 2010. As a national health foundation, we promote wellness, health, and access to high-quality health care for everyone. This work is enhanced by the time and commitment of Aetna employees, who have volunteered more than 2.3 million hours since 2003. Aetna's current giving is focused on addressing the rising rate of adult and childhood obesity in the U.S.; promoting racial and ethnic equity in health and health care; and advancing integrated health care. For more information, visit [www.AetnaFoundation.org](http://www.AetnaFoundation.org).