

# Why Let's Move Didn't Move



By Shari Portnoy — May 17, 2019



Why Let's Move Didn't - What happened?

Michelle Obama's memoir, *Becoming*, sold 10 million copies in just six months. Random House Chief Executive said, "It could be the biggest selling autobiography ever." In addition to people buying her book, they are shelling out big bucks to see her speak about it. If Let's Move Childcare had that success rate, childhood obesity would be eradicated like the bubonic plague.

What happened to her conviction and enthusiasm for a healthier nation? The First Lady was lauded for her initiative to fight childhood obesity and promote healthy eating. The program goal, "To empower childcare providers to help children get off to a healthy start," sounds like a nice idea but it was really no more than a website and paper.

Childhood obesity is a big problem that Michelle could have tackled full on. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) 13.9% of 2-5 year olds are obese. That number doubles to about 24% for African Americans and Latinos. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) 10 million 2-5 year olds are obese.

If the upward trend continues, everyone on the planet will be obese in 100 years. Last month the Lancet published an article\* stating that 20% of all global deaths are now due to poor diet. Imagine what this program could have done to save lives and decrease the healthcare budget.

There are several reasons for the program's failure. One reason is leadership. The Director of Nutrition Policy for the White House had no formal nutrition education. He was promoted from his job as an assistant chef. There are 70,000 Registered Dietitians who must go through rigorous scientific courses, have a minimum of a four year degree in nutrition and complete internships to obtain certification. Michelle didn't hire them. Instead she hired a cook, who happened to be a

family friend. He just won the prestigious James Beard award but he didn't win any awards fighting childhood obesity. It's a mockery to science and Registered Dietitians that the Director of Nutrition Policy didn't even have a nutrition degree.

Another reason the program failed was lack of administration and monitoring. Paperwork consisting of checklists to set goals on serving healthy foods and increasing exercise were given to Daycare Centers. Center Directors are bogged down with work and they resent outsiders coming in with more paperwork. If they finished filling out the forms, they could print out a certificate. There was no follow-up to see if they met the goals. There was no cost-analysis. There was no rubric or program evaluation. There was no one beside the person filling out the forms that even knew about the goals. Yet, Let's Move was listed on the White House website as one of the Obama presidency accomplishments.

What a missed opportunity for the nation. Maybe Michelle can use the proceeds from the book to hire personal trainers and nutritionists for every obese preschooler.

\*Source: Forouhi, N. G., Unwin, N. (2019) *Global diet and health: old questions, fresh evidence, and new horizons*. The Lancet doi:10.1016/S014-6736(19)30500-8.

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