

FEDERAL DIETS

QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** National Institutes of Health
- **FUMBLE:** \$2,658,929 weight-loss program for truck drivers
- **RECOVERY:** Congress should develop clearer expectations for areas of research for NIH

The American economy is powered in no small part by the thousands of trucks on the road each day. It is certainly important for individuals behind the wheel of giant 18-wheelers to be healthy. But do taxpayers really need to spend more than \$2.6 million on a trucker weight-loss intervention program?

From 2011 to 2015, NIH awarded Oregon Health & Science University a total of \$2,658,929 to conduct a cell-phone-based program for a “weight loss competition” and “motivational interviewing.”³⁵ The federal SHIFT program included an initial six-month weight-monitoring program followed by a 30-month follow-up study.³⁶ The shocking conclusion reached in the 2009 report: individuals who completed motivational interviewing sessions and computer-based training were better able to make healthy living decisions. Those who engaged in the challenging six-month study were then given the chance to participate in a 30-month study.³⁷

This extended program was designed to determine whether those who successfully completed the six-month study could maintain a healthier lifestyle without additional motivation or training.³⁸ Individuals who participated in the program and in the entry phone interview were given a \$20 gift card.³⁹ Participants were then asked to self-report their weight, food intake, and exercise activities over the phone.⁴⁰

RECOVERY

Encouraging people to make healthier living decisions is definitely a good thing that should be done—by doctors, families, and friends, not the federal government and not at a price tag for American taxpayers of \$2.6 million over four years.⁴¹ NIH should have thought twice before funding programs when private funding of research studies is a better avenue. Congress, in consultation with NIH and other research institutes, can better assess areas of federal research.

For more information, please visit:

[NIH RePORT: Project Information](#)

[US National Library of Medicine, NIH: Weight Loss Maintenance Among SHIFT Pilot Study Participants 30-Months Post-Intervention](#)