

National Prevention Strategy Simplified: Local Health Departments' Roadmap to Health and Wellness



“The National Prevention Strategy, called for under the Affordable Care Act, will help us transform our health care system away from a focus on sickness and disease to a focus on prevention and wellness.”

—Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius

Introduction

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), representing the nation's 2,800 local governmental health departments (LHDs), recommends that LHDs adopt the National Prevention Strategy (NPS) to advance the United States' efforts to prevent disease and help Americans live more healthful and productive lives. The NPS promotes a shift from a healthcare system focused on sickness and disease to one focused on prevention and wellness. In line with this shift, NACCHO encourages LHDs to use multi-sector, integrated approaches such as the NPS as an effective strategy for protecting the health and well-being of its communities. Following the evidence-based Strategic Directions and Priorities of the NPS will support LHDs in planning, implementing, and evaluating integrated and cost-effective strategies for achieving health and wellness in their communities.

History of the NPS

The Affordable Care Act, landmark health legislation passed in 2010, created the National Prevention Council and called for the development of the NPS to realize the benefits of prevention for all Americans. The National Prevention Council comprises 17 federal departments, agencies, and offices and is chaired by the Surgeon General. The National Prevention Council developed the NPS with input from the Prevention Advisory Group, stakeholders, and the public. The NPS is critical to the prevention focus of the Affordable Care Act and builds on the law's effort to lower healthcare costs, improve the quality of care, and provide coverage options for the uninsured.

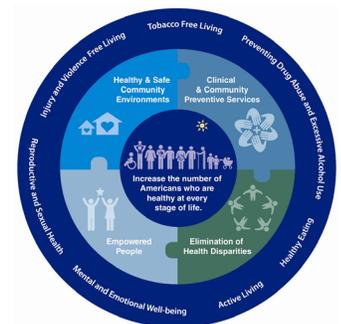
What can LHDs do to Advance NPS Strategic Directions and Priorities?

The Strategy provides evidence-based recommendations LHDs can use to improve health and wellness and address leading causes of disability and death. Recommended policy, program, and systems approaches are identified for each Strategic Direction and Priority. Preference has been given to efforts that will have the greatest impact on the largest number of people and can be sustained over time. Each recommendation is based on the best recent scientific evidence. The tables on the following pages provide more context for understanding each Strategic Direction and Priority. LHDs can use these recommendations as considerations in their strategic planning and priority-setting activities as part of their prevention efforts. LHDs should refer to the Strategy (www.surgeongeneral.gov/initiatives/prevention/strategy/report.pdf) to learn which specific evidence-based actions they can implement to carry out these recommendations.

Strategic Directions and Priorities

The NPS envisions a prevention-oriented society where all sectors recognize the value of health for individuals, families, and society and work together to achieve better health for all Americans.

To achieve this end, the NPS identifies four Strategic Directions and seven targeted Priorities. The Strategic Directions provide a strong foundation for prevention efforts and include core recommendations necessary to build a prevention-oriented society. The Priorities provide evidence-based recommendations about efforts that are most likely to reduce the burden of the leading causes of preventable death and major illness.



NPS Priorities

Tobacco Free Living—Living tobacco free reduces a person’s risk of developing heart disease, various cancers, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, periodontal disease, and other diseases and dying prematurely.

Preventing Drug Abuse and Excessive Alcohol Use—Increases people’s chances of living long, healthy, and productive lives.

Healthy Eating—Eating healthy can help reduce people’s risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, and several types of cancer and help them maintain a healthy body weight.

Active Living—Physical activity strengthens bones and muscles, reduces stress and depression, and makes it easier to maintain a healthy body weight or to reduce weight if overweight or obese.

Injury and Violence Free Living—Reducing injury and violence improves physical and emotional health.

Reproductive and Sexual Health—Healthy reproductive and sexual practices can play a critical role in enabling people to remain healthy and actively contribute to their community.

Mental and Emotional Well-Being—Positive mental health allows people to realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life, work productively, and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

NPS Strategic Directions

Healthy & Safe Community Environments—Create, sustain, and recognize communities that promote health and wellness through prevention.

Clinical & Community Preventive Services—Ensure that prevention-focused healthcare and community prevention efforts are available, integrated, and mutually reinforcing.

Empowered People—Support people in making healthy choices.

Elimination of Health Disparities—Eliminate disparities, improving the quality of life for all Americans.

NPS Recommendations for Achieving the Strategic Directions

Healthy and Safe Community Environments
Improve air, land, and water quality
Design/promote affordable, accessible, safe, and healthy housing
Strengthen health departments’ ability to provide essential services
Integrate health criteria into decision-making across sectors
Collaborate across sectors to promote health and safety
Use integrated data systems to promote cross-sector information exchange
Identify and implement strategies that are proven to work and conduct research where evidence is lacking
Maintain a skilled, cross-trained, and diverse prevention workforce
Clinical and Community Preventive Services
Support the National Quality Strategy’s focus on improving cardiovascular health
Use payment and reimbursement mechanisms to encourage delivery of clinical preventive services
Expand use of interoperable health information technology
Support implementation of community-based preventive services and enhance linkages with clinical care
Reduce barriers to accessing clinical and community preventive services
Coordinate and integrate clinical, behavioral, and complementary health strategies
Empowered People
Provide tools and information to make healthy choices
Promote positive social interactions and support healthy decision-making
Empower people and communities to plan and implement prevention policies and programs
Improve education and employment opportunities
Elimination of Health Disparities
Reduce disparities in access to quality care
Increase capacity of the prevention workforce to address disparities
Support research to identify effective strategies to eliminate health disparities
Standardize data collection efforts to identify and address disparities

NPS Recommendations for Achieving the Priorities

Tobacco Free Living
Support comprehensive tobacco free and other evidence-based tobacco control policies
Support full implementation of the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act
Expand use of tobacco cessation services
Standardize data collection efforts to identify and address disparities
Use media to educate and encourage people to live tobacco free
Preventing Drug Abuse and Excessive Alcohol Use
Support state, tribal, local, and territorial implementation and enforcement of alcohol control policies
Create environments that empower young people not to drink or use other drugs
Identify alcohol and other drug abuse disorders early and provide brief intervention, referral, and treatment
Reduce inappropriate access to and use of prescription drugs
Healthy Eating
Increase access to healthy and affordable foods in communities
Implement organizational and programmatic nutrition standards and policies
Improve nutritional quality of the food supply
Help people recognize and make healthy food and beverage choices
Support policies and programs that promote breastfeeding
Active Living
Encourage community design and development that supports physical activity
Promote and strengthen school and early learning policies and programs that increase physical activity
Facilitate access to safe, accessible, and affordable places for physical activity
Support workplace policies and programs that increase physical activity
Assess physical activity levels and provide education, counseling, and referrals
Injury and Violence Free Living
Implement and strengthen policies and programs to enhance transportation safety
Support community and streetscape design that promotes safety and prevents injuries
Promote and strengthen policies and programs to prevent falls, especially among older adults
Promote and enhance policies and programs to increase safety and prevent injury in the workplace
Strengthen policies and programs to prevent violence
Provide individuals and families with the knowledge, skills, and tools to make safe choices that prevent violence and injuries.
Reproductive and Sexual Health
Increase use of preconception and prenatal care
Support reproductive and sexual health services and support services for pregnant and parenting women
Provide effective sexual health education, especially for adolescents
Enhance early detection of HIV, viral hepatitis, and other sexually transmitted infections and improve linkage to care
Mental and Emotional Well-Being
Promote positive early childhood development, including positive parenting and violence-free homes
Facilitate social connectedness and community engagement across the lifespan
Provide individuals and families with the support necessary to maintain positive mental well-being
Promote early identification of mental health needs and access to quality services

[FACT SHEET]

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How LHDs can Use the NPS to Achieve Health and Wellness

With the passing of the Affordable Care Act and the changing dynamics in local, state, and federal levels of government, LHDs are uniquely positioned to help their communities achieve health and wellness by following NPS Strategic Directions and Priorities. The NPS supports LHDs in achieving health and wellness in their communities by offering tips for the following:

- Forging cross-sector partnerships in community planning and design efforts;
- Advocating for integrating health considerations in policymaking and program development;
- Using NPS-recommended indicators to conduct comprehensive needs assessments;
- Developing community health improvement plans;
- Implementing evidence-based prevention policies and programs;
- Integrating data systems to build surveillance and communication infrastructure; and
- Disseminating lessons learned from efforts to implement recommendations of the NPS.

Conclusion

The NPS can help LHDs weave prevention into the fabric of their communities' everyday lives. LHDs should engage partners in prevention from all sectors in American society to implement the Strategic Directions and Priorities of the NPS, so that all Americans can live longer and healthier at every stage of life. Tools that can support LHDs integration of the NPS into their prevention efforts include The Guide to Community Preventive Services, Healthy People 2020, the Health in all Policies Framework (HiAP), and NACCHO's Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model. These tools can be accessed through NACCHO's website at www.naccho.org.

Following the evidence-based Strategic Directions and Priorities of the NPS will support LHDs in their planning, implementation, and evaluation of integrated and cost-effective strategies for achieving health and wellness in their communities.

Acknowledgments

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice for local public health departments.

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