The National Prevention Strategy

In June, the National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council, established by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), released the National Prevention Strategy. The goal of the first-ever National Prevention Strategy (Strategy) is to “increase the number of people who are healthy at every stage of life.”

Building on ACA’s intent to lower health care costs, improve care quality, and provide health care coverage for the uninsured, the document is a comprehensive plan to reduce chronic illness, much of which is preventable, among Americans.

The National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council (Council) developed the Strategy. The Council consists of 17 federal departments, agencies and offices and is chaired by the Surgeon General. The agencies span the gamut, from health and human services to agriculture to justice to transportation. The Council received input from the Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health (also created by the ACA), a diverse group of stakeholders, and the public. Stakeholders submitted many themes found in the strategy, such as the belief that prevention is important at every stage of life, and the importance of a cross-sector approach and community-focused and community-led efforts.

The Strategy aims to guide the country in the most effective means for improving health. It reframes health as a wellness and prevention model rather than a sickness and disease model, based on the premise that “health is more than merely the absence of disease; it is physical, mental, and social well-being.”

The Strategy builds on federal initiatives, including:

- Healthy People 2020, which has 10-year goals for health promotion and disease prevention for all Americans,
- The First Lady’s “Let’s Move” Initiative, a comprehensive initiative to solve the problem of obesity, and
- Communities Putting Prevention to Work, a program to reduce chronic diseases related to obesity and tobacco.

The Council is responsible for coordinating the Strategy as well as submitting annual status reports to Congress.

**Strategic Directions**

The document identifies four strategic directions as the foundation for all prevention efforts:

1. **Healthy and safe community environments.** Where you live, play, learn, and work should be healthy and safe.
2. **Clinical and community preventive services.** Clinical and community preventive services should support and reinforce each other.
3. **Empowered people.** People should receive consumer-friendly information, resources, and support to make healthy decisions.

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2Ibid
3Ibid
4Ibid
The elimination of health disparities. The disparate impact of illness and disease linked with socioeconomic and environmental factors should be eliminated.

Priorities

Within the framework of the strategic directions are seven priorities:

- Tobacco-free living
- Preventing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use
- Healthy eating
- Active living
- Injury and violence free living
- Reproductive and sexual health
- Mental and emotional well-being

Implementation of the Strategy will be measured by key indicators, many of which are from Healthy People 2020.

Implementation

The Strategy includes roles for multiple partners, including the federal government, which will provide national leadership; state; tribal; local; and territorial government. Other partners include businesses and employers, health care clinicians, insurers and systems, schools and colleges, community organizations and individuals and families.

Local public health departments are a natural fit in leading the local implementation of the National Prevention Strategy. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is addressing the National Prevention Strategy goals through its Healthy Chicago public health agenda, a comprehensive plan designed to promote health and well-being. Healthy Chicago’s priority areas are well-aligned with national strategic directions and priority areas.

Healthy Chicago’s twelve priorities are:

- Tobacco Use
- Obesity Prevention
- HIV Prevention
- Adolescent Health
- Cancer Disparities
- Heart Disease & Stroke
- Access to Health Care
- Healthy Mothers & Babies
- Communicable Disease Control & Prevention
- Healthy Homes
- Violence Prevention
- Public Health Infrastructure

Healthy Chicago provides strategies to address each priority area, focusing on: policies, including regulatory changes and laws that will be pursued to improve health; programs and services that will be delivered; and education and public awareness efforts to reinforce proposed policies and programs.

As with the National Prevention Strategy, CDPH’s Healthy Chicago recognizes the importance of working in partnership with stakeholders, including the faith, education, and business communities; community-based organizations; health care providers; and other public health partners. CDPH will work with partners to identify their potential roles in agenda implementation. Targets have been set in order to measure progress, which incorporate many of the objectives of Healthy People 2020. The Healthy Chicago public health agenda can be accessed at www.cityofchicago.org/health.