

## PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTERS PROGRAM

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- The behavioral and environmental factors that cause many chronic diseases, injuries, poor pregnancy outcomes, and some infectious diseases need to be addressed and changed.
- Prevention research makes a critical contribution to keeping people free from disease and helping them alter risk factors in their lives and in their communities.
- Gaps that exist between known research findings and the translation of those findings into public health practice and policy need to be eliminated.
- As the nation's population ages and as healthcare costs increase, prevention is an even more critical part of the national healthcare agenda.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

The Prevention Research Centers (PRC) program is a national network of 28 academic research centers committed to prevention research and the translation of that research into programs and policies. The centers work with members of their communities to develop and evaluate community-based interventions that address the leading causes of death and disability in the nation. Linking university researchers, health agencies, community-based organizations, and national nonprofit organizations facilitates the translation of promising research findings into practical, innovative, and effective programs. CDC's PRC program places special emphasis on improving quality of life among special populations (e.g., youth, elderly, underserved), and curbing the nation's excessive healthcare costs.

#### *Example of Program in Action*

Long-term, community-based research can help analyze how children's health behaviors including physical activity, eating habits, and substance abuse may put them at risk for disease as adults. In *Healthy Passages*, three PRCs (University of Texas Health Science Center, University of Alabama, and University of California at Los Angeles) are following a group of children from various ethnic and economic backgrounds for 12 years and periodically thereafter. By interviewing children and their parents and observing neighborhoods and schools, the researchers are assessing the role of the environment, cultural values, and other factors in influencing health. As data are gathered, they are shared with local community organizations that can put the information to immediate use in determining the types of intervention programs to offer locally.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Through Project DEFINE (Developing an Evaluation Framework: Insuring National Excellence), CDC developed evaluation strategies for the PRC program in collaboration with the PRCs' faculty, staff, partners, and community members. The strategies ensure that each center can promote community health and contribute to the national program. All centers will report on performance indicators, which will allow for consistent tracking of outcomes over time.