

More than 50 million Americans or 1 in 6 individuals, report having a disability. As the nation's population ages, these numbers are expected to grow.

CDC Promoting the Health of People with Disabilities

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's (CDC) disability and health program works to promote the health, well-being, independence, productivity, and full societal participation of people with disabilities. A disability is a long-term limitation in mobility, cognition, vision, or hearing. Through public health efforts, such as surveillance, research, and health promotion, CDC aims to reduce health disparities and the incidence and severity of secondary conditions, including additional physical or mental health conditions that occur as a result of having a primary disabling condition.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT DISABILITIES — SURVEILLANCE

Using population-based surveys, CDC identifies critical information about the health of adults with disabilities compared with adults without disabilities. For example:

- ▶ A higher percentage of adults with disabilities (40%) report fair or poor health than do adults without disabilities (10%).
- ▶ Among adults with disabilities, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans report fair or poor health at disproportionately higher rates than whites and Asian Americans.
- ▶ Adults with disabilities are more likely than adults without disabilities to smoke, to be obese, and to be physically inactive.

CDC's disability and health program collaborates with partners and states to reduce - and eventually eliminate - these health disparities.

IMPROVING RESEARCH EFFORTS

CDC funds several university projects to develop evidence-based health promotion interventions to improve health, reduce health disparities, and prevent secondary conditions among people with disabilities. Recent research activities have addressed a variety of diverse topics, including:

- ▶ *Living Well with a Disability*, a health intervention program that encourages people with physical disabilities to manage their secondary conditions, such as pain and fatigue. The program also helps improve the ability of people with disabilities to perform basic and complex life skills, such as applying for a job, managing a home, or caring effectively for one's children.
- ▶ *Steps to Your Health for Adults with Learning Disabilities* is a health promotion program for adults with intellectual disabilities, autism, or traumatic brain injury that emphasizes physical activity, good nutrition, and stress reduction as key aspects of a healthy lifestyle.

Adults with disabilities face challenges in:

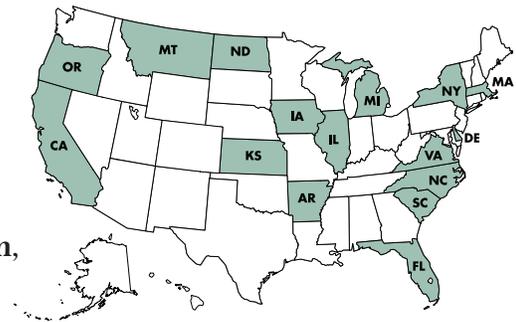
- ▶ **Employment** – Half as many adults with disabilities are employed as those without disabilities (35% versus 78%).
- ▶ **Economic status** – Three times as many adults with disabilities live in poverty with annual household incomes below \$15,000 (26% versus 9%).
- ▶ **Transportation & health care** – Adults with disabilities are twice as likely as those without disabilities to have inadequate transportation (31% versus 13%), and a much higher percentage go without needed health care (18% versus 7%). (From the 2004 nationwide Harris Survey)

DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING INTERVENTIONS

CDC supports the development and implementation of health promotion interventions for people with disabilities. Many activities—physical activity, smoking cessation, nutritious diets, preventive screenings—promote the same healthy behaviors as those encouraged for people without disabilities. However, many barriers exist for people with disabilities to participate in exercise and health sustaining activities. Barriers may include such factors as inaccessible health care facilities or health screening equipment, discriminatory attitudes, poverty, and lack of knowledge among people with disabilities or their health care providers. Activities that promote healthier behaviors for people with disabilities can include education and support for making healthier choices, thereby improving their quality of life.

CDC SUPPORTS:

- ▶ Programs aimed at improving the overall health and quality of life for people with disabilities in 16 states: **Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, and Virginia.** Projects include preventing secondary conditions, improving access to public health programs and clinical services, and implementing effective health promotion and wellness programs for persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Organizations such as the Association of University Centers on Disabilities work to strengthen the nation's capacity to carry out public health activities in the area of disabilities. In addition, they provide technical assistance to state disability and health programs.
- ▶ The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD) at the University of Illinois at Chicago is an information center that promotes physical activity for people with disabilities. Over the past year, NCPAD responded to requests from more than 50 states and territories, the District of Columbia, and 16 countries for information on physical activity.



FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

Although CDC is working with a variety of partners to carry out surveillance and research, and to develop state infrastructure for health promotion and intervention, much work remains to improve the health of people with disabilities. Fully accessible health care settings and equipment will improve clinical and specialty care for people with disabilities. Efforts are needed to increase the inclusion of people with disabilities in public health promotion and prevention services. Improved health will increase the capacity of people with disabilities to engage fully in social activities such as work, play, and family life.

