CDC's Healthy Communities Program

CREATING A CULTURE OF HEALTHY LIVING

DISCOVER THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Division of Adult and Community Health

What is a healthy community?

A healthy community has leaders in organizations of all types (e.g., businesses, health agencies and centers, schools, faith-based organizations) who are committed to solving today's and tomorrow's critical public health problems. These leaders make needed changes in living conditions (e.g., structural and opportunity changes) to make the community an inviting place in which to live, work, learn, worship, and play.

Why are healthy communities important?

With today's financial challenges, including the rising cost of health care, it's more important than ever that communities and organizations make the most of their available resources to prevent chronic diseases and conditions, such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, obesity, diabetes, and arthritis. Since the majority (70%) of these diseases and conditions are caused by preventable risk factors (e.g., tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthful eating), communities can effectively impact chronic disease by making changes in systems and environments to support healthful lifestyles.

Chronic diseases pose a major health challenge in the U.S. in terms of death, illness, and disability:

- Heart disease and stroke remain the first and third leading causes of death in the U.S., accounting for more than 30% of all mortality.
- Cancer claims more than half a million lives in the U.S. each year and remains the nation's second leading cause of death.
- Nearly 24 million Americans have diabetes. An estimated 57 million U.S. adults have pre-diabetes, which places them at increased risk of developing diabetes.
- Each year, an estimated 443,000 people in the U.S. die prematurely from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke (death caused by smoking-related lung disease, heart disease, or cancer).
- In the U.S., 50 million (22%) adults have doctor-diagnosed arthritis, making it the most common cause of disability.

Many Americans still engage in behaviors that significantly elevate their risk for chronic disease. For instance:

- Approximately 46 million U.S. adults smoke cigarettes.
- In 2007, almost two-thirds (65%) of high school students and more than one-third (36%) of all adults did not meet national recommendations for aerobic physical activity.*
- In 2007, only 32% of high school students ate at least two servings of fruit each day, and only 13% ate at least three servings of vegetables daily. Only 24% of U.S. adults ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

*2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

COSTS THAT CAN BE AVOIDED 2003-2023
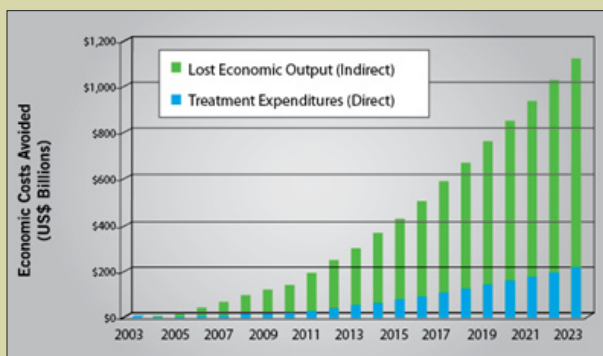
Source: the Milken Institute, www.milkeninstitute.org/publications

Taking action saves money

Treatment for people with chronic diseases and conditions accounts for about 75% of the more than $2 trillion spent annually on medical care in the U.S. According to a 2007 report from Milken Institute on the economic burden of the chronic disease, even modest reductions in preventable risk factors could lead to 40 million fewer cases of illness and a savings of more than $1 trillion by 2023.

www.cdc.gov/HealthyCommunitiesProgram

What can leaders at the national, state, and local level do?

Committed leaders can provide the direction, inspiration, and will to bring together needed partnerships and resources to ensure success. Leaders also can ensure that there is an active plan to sustain a community's ongoing ability and commitment to work together to establish, advance, and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life for all.

What are some examples of community success?

Strong action at the community level is critical to effectively impacting the burden of chronic diseases. CDC's investments are producing impressive results. For example, communities funded by CDC's Healthy Communities Program facilitated the following policy changes:

- Pinellas County, Florida, passed a policy requiring after-school programs to provide children with at least 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week. This, in turn, helped provide support for the passage of a 2008 statewide law that requires elementary schools to provide 150 minutes of physical education per week to the schools' approximately 1.2 million students.
- DeKalb County, Georgia, passed a 100% tobacco-free policy for all schools in the DeKalb County School System (the third-largest school district in the state) and in the City Schools of Decatur school district. This policy change will have a positive effect on the health of approximately 120,000 students and staff members.
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which has a population of 1.4 million people, banned the use of trans fats in food-service establishments and requires menu-labeling information about calories, fat, sodium, and carbohydrates in restaurants that have 15 or more outlets.

THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS SUPPORT PREVENTION

A 2009 poll conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Public Opinion Strategies found that almost two-thirds of Americans favor an increased investment in disease prevention, and that disease prevention is one of the most popular components of health care reform. By nearly a three-to-one margin (70%), people think prevention will save money rather than cost money.

How can communities be successful?

To be successful, communities need the type of support provided by CDC'S Healthy Communities Program:

- **Funding to start the process.** As we all know, many important projects need extra effort to get going. Adequate funding can help establish key positions and processes that create strong partnerships and build momentum for meaningful and sustainable community change.
- **Technical support and training.** The best athletes rarely excel in their field without proper coaching, so why should this be any different for leaders striving to improve the health of their communities? Leaders need to know what community models

have worked and what strategies have proven to be effective. They also need to know how to work effectively with people with different perspectives and from a variety of settings to plan, implement, and evaluate key community health strategies.
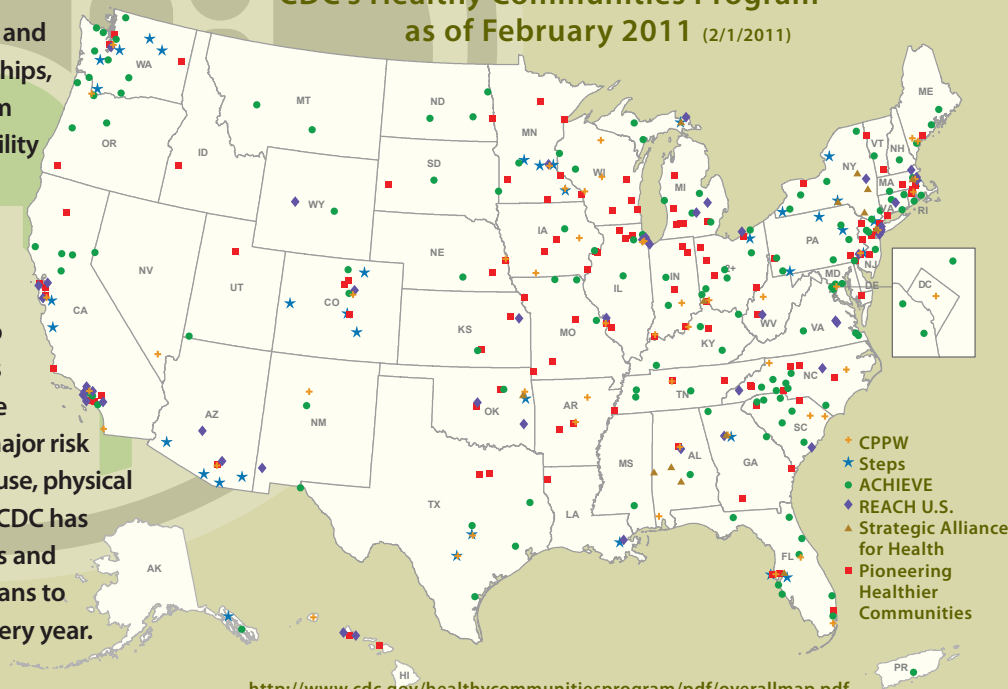
- **A communication network.** Communities need an efficient communication process so that they can learn from the experiences of similar communities or from communities trying to carry out similar strategies. The ability to connect with other communities saves time and money, and helps to motivate communities to persevere through any challenge.

www.cdc.gov/HealthyCommunitiesProgram

CREATING A CULTURE OF HEALTHY LIVING

What is our role?

Working directly with communities and through state and national partnerships, CDC's Healthy Communities Program strives to improve a community's ability to work collaboratively to address current and future chronic disease and other public health challenges. Our program promotes the use of population-based health policies to create and sustain positive changes in systems and environments. These policy-based changes address the major risk factors for chronic disease (tobacco use, physical inactivity, and unhealthful eating). CDC has funded more than 250 communities and 50 state health departments and plans to support additional communities every year.

CDC's Healthy Communities Program as of February 2011 (2/1/2011)

Legend:
- **+ CPPW**
- **★ Steps**
- **● ACHIEVE**
- **◆ REACH U.S.**
- **▲ Strategic Alliance for Health**
- **■ Pioneering Healthier Communities**

http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/pdf/overallmap.pdf

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COMMUNITY GOALS

Healthy communities:

- Engage community members where they live, work, worship, play, and learn.
- Analyze local health issues to take effective action.
- Shape policies and sustainable environments that promote health and quality of life.
- Create sustainable, community-based improvements that address the root causes of chronic disease.
- Learn from their efforts so they are prepared to meet future health challenges.

PROGRAM STRATEGIES

Reduce the burden of chronic disease and achieve health equity by:

- Mobilizing national networks to provide technical support and training to communities.
- Providing funding to help communities implement policies that sustain environmental and systems changes.
- Connecting with leaders to teach them how to undertake effective community-change processes.
- Disseminating effective strategies and tools to build the capacity of partners and communities.
- Monitoring and evaluating strategies and integrating new practical approaches.