



April 5, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

It has been a little over a year since we met at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) external consultation: *Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Accelerating the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB*. During this time, CDC's commitment to the charge made at this consultation has remained steadfast, and progress has been made to implement and integrate strategies to address social determinants of health (SDH) as they relate to our focus diseases.

Over the last year, conversations between CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention (NCHHSTP) and our colleagues have moved from the conference rooms to the workplace to actively address the complex social and economic conditions that drive these diseases. Together, we are transforming the way we do our work by taking a closer look at the SDH that we have known about and addressed on some level for a long time. However, as we look again, we understand more clearly that these SDH are not tangential to exposure risks and risky behaviors, but are connected to them and may play an even greater role than thought previously in putting a person at risk for the diseases we work to prevent. In fact, often times they are the precursors to risky behaviors.

Your participation, intellectual capital, and continued partnership are moving this work forward and bringing it to the forefront of our national and international efforts to reduce the toll of these diseases and protect the health of all people. Much has been accomplished and many activities are ongoing. I would like to share a few of these with you now, from the framework being established to the actual development and implementation of programs and activities.

CDC Accomplishments

- [Dear Colleague Letter](#) to promote partner engagement and five-page summary of the consultation distributed January 2009.
- Discussion of social determinants of health posted to the [NCHHSTP blog](#) December 2008.
- Consultation evaluation and feedback completed March 2009.
- NCHHSTP External Consultation [Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Accelerating the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB - Meeting Report](#), which includes details of our strategies and future direction published online June 2009.
- Launched [Social Determinants of Health Web site](#)

A new SDH web site was developed to serve as an information source, point of contact and sharing portal for national and international stakeholders interested in addressing SDH. All published SDH consultation resources are located on the web site. Please continue to provide your feedback and postings. It is what makes this site the incredible communication tool it is.

- Revised [Health Disparities Web site](#)
Content on the Health Disparities web site was reorganized around specific populations affected by disparities in HIV, viral hepatitis, STDs, and TB for user friendly access to comprehensive information with links to surveillance data on each disease.
- Changed the name of NCHHSTP's Office of Health Disparities, established in June 2003, to the Office of Health Equity, to reflect expanding global and national priorities to address SDH for the elimination of health disparities.
- Completed an assessment of NCHHSTP surveillance systems in HIV, viral hepatitis, STDs, and TB to identify SDH variables collected. This is a key step to providing center-wide guidance on SDH measures to routinely monitor and identify data sets critical to obtaining key SDH variables.

These are some of the activities ongoing at CDC. As well, there is much work being done across the United States. Here are just few examples of accomplishments from the field.

Field Accomplishments

- **Jefferson County Health Department**, Birmingham, Alabama – Grant announcements ask applicants directly to specify how projects address social determinants of health, also providing clear terminology to educate applicants regarding these determinants.
- **Ohio Department of Health**. Incorporate health equity concepts into all of their grant-funded interventions, providing a template that includes health equity concepts and language that are generic enough for all programs to use. Grants totaling \$500 million will be impacted by this change.
- **Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation and the Administration for Children and Families**. Held a Social Determinants of Health Forum in association with the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative, focusing on the relationship between marriage and health in African American Communities. The Forum highlighted nine new studies that examined the links between marriage and risk reduction, mental health, obesity, and chronic health conditions among African Americans.

These examples are representative of the encouraging changes that are occurring in public health. But as we know, accomplishments are not a stopping place; they build a more solid foundation from which to continue our work—work such as the development of a special issue of *Public*

Health Reports on addressing social determinants of health and HIV, viral hepatitis, STDs and TB to be published in Summer 2010; a White Paper on SDH; and language on addressing SDH for inclusion in upcoming funding announcements.

This new decade promises growth, discovery, and opportunity for disease prevention, health care, and public health. During a time of tremendous change in the landscape of public health, the focus for our work must be forward thinking and innovatively structured.

With that in mind, I am including here a call for papers for another *Public Health Reports* special journal issue on Data Systems and Social Determinants of Health. This is our opportunity to continue to build the scientific knowledge base on SDH through the identification of the data required for effective decision making.

We want to continue to hear about and engage with you in your work, and we will continue to share our information and activities with you. Let us know how you have incorporated social determinants of health approaches into your organization and work. Please send information to OHEinquiries@cdc.gov so that we can share it with others on the CDC Social Determinants of Health web site.

In closing, I want to reemphasize that our work to ensure health equity depends on our focus on the social determinants of health and the dynamic interplay of factors that continue to drive epidemics of HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, STDs, and TB. You are critical to ensuring a more holistic and integrated prevention approach that comprehensively addresses individual, social, and structural barriers to health.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting the health of all people.

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