
OUR VISION FOR A HEALTHIER AMERICA

America should strive to be the healthiest nation in the world. Every American should have the opportunity to be as healthy as he or she can be. Every community should be safe from threats to its health. And all individuals and families should have a high level of services that protect, promote, and preserve their health, regardless of who they are or where they live.

To realize these goals, the nation must strengthen America's public health system in order to: 1) provide people with the information, resources, and environment they need to make healthier choices and live healthier lives, and 2) protect people from health threats beyond their control, such as bioterrorism, natural disasters, infectious disease outbreaks, and environmental hazards. Achieving this vision will require the combined efforts of federal, state, and local governments in partnership with businesses, communities, and citizens.

The Problem and Need for Action

Today, serious gaps exist in the nation's ability to safeguard health, putting our families, communities, states, and nation at risk.

- Almost six years after September 11, 2001, and almost two years after Hurricane Katrina, major problems remain in our readiness to respond to large-scale health emergencies. The country is still insufficiently prepared to protect people from disease outbreaks, natural disasters, or acts of bioterrorism, leaving Americans unnecessarily vulnerable to these threats.
- Even though America spends more than \$2 trillion annually on health care -- more than any other nation in the world -- tens of millions of Americans suffer every day from preventable illnesses and chronic diseases like cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's that rob them of health and quality of life. Baby boomers may be the first generation to live less healthy lives than their parents. And, the obesity crisis is putting millions of adults and children at risk for unprecedented levels of major diseases like diabetes and heart disease.
- Poor health is putting the nation's economic security in jeopardy. The skyrocketing costs of health care threaten to bankrupt American businesses, causing some companies to send jobs to other countries where costs are lower. Helping people to stay healthy and better manage illnesses are the best ways to drive down health care costs. Keeping the American workforce well helps American business remain competitive in the global economy.

America must provide quality, affordable health care to all. But that's not enough. A strong public health system and public policies focused on prevention of disease and injury must be part of the solution.

Guiding Principles for Prevention

Preventing and combating threats to our health is the primary responsibility of our nation's public health system. The public health system consists of health agencies at the federal, state, and local levels of government that work in collaboration with health care providers, businesses, and community partners. Achieving a Healthier America requires a national commitment to revitalizing and modernizing the public health system.

1. We believe prevention must drive our nation's health strategy.

- Our support for health care has focused for too long on caring for people after they become sick or harmed. Prevention means improving the quality of people's lives, sparing individuals from needless suffering, and eliminating unnecessary costs from our health system.
- Fundamentals like investigating epidemics, educating the public about health risks, early screening for disease, and immunization are proven to help prevent and reduce the rates of illness and disease. A greater emphasis on prevention could significantly reduce rates of chronic illness.

2. We believe Americans deserve healthy and safe places to live, work, and play.

- By supporting policies and programs like promoting healthier schools, smoke-free environments, and improved community design, the government can do more to meet its responsibility to help citizens lead healthier lives.
- The government must protect air, water, and food; minimize chemical exposures; and provide communities healthier environments.

3. We believe every community should be prepared to meet the threats of infectious disease, terrorism, and natural disasters.

- A basic role of government is to protect us and our health from threats like bioterrorism and infectious disease outbreaks, and to keep our food supply safe.

4. We believe Americans deserve to know what government is doing to keep them healthy and safe.

- The federal government role is to assure that all parts of the public health system have sufficient resources and meet basic standards for protecting the public's health. Government at all levels must also be held accountable for the health and safety of the American people. And, the government must show that it is spending public health dollars effectively and in a way that clearly improves the public's health and safety.

OUR COMMITMENT TO A HEALTHIER AMERICA

We, the undersigned, are proud to be signatories to this commitment to a healthier America:

Commitments as of October 2, 2007

AARP	American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
Active for Life	Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
AIDS Action Council	Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics	Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Alliance for Healthy Homes	Association of Public Health Laboratories
American Academy of Pediatrics	Association of Schools of Public Health
American Cancer Society-Cancer Action Network	Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing
American College of Clinical Pharmacy	Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine	Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors
American College of Preventive Medicine	Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses
American Diabetes Association	Bauman Family Foundation
American Heart Association	Breast Cancer Fund
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering	California Communities Against Toxics
American Lung Association	Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
American Nurses Association	CDC Foundation
American Optometric Association	Center for Behavioral Epidemiology and Community Health, Graduate School of Public Health, San Diego State University
American Osteopathic Association	Center for Biosecurity, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
American Pharmacists Association	
American Public Health Association	
American Red Cross	
American School Health Association	
Amputee Coalition of America	

The Center for Infectious Disease
Research and Policy, University of MN
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Childbirth Connection
Clean Water Action
Commissioned Officers Association of
the U.S. Public Health Service
Commonweal
Directors of Health Promotion and
Education
Environmental Defense
FamilyCook Productions
Families Against Cancer & Toxics
Families in Search of Truth
First Focus
Fit & Able Productions, Inc.
Florida Hospital Celebration Health
Georgia Public Health Association
Grantmakers In Health
Healthy Homes Collaborative
HIV Medicine Association
Home Safety Council
Immunization Action Coalition
Ingham County (MI) Health Department
Institute for Agriculture and Trade
Policy
International Health, Racquet, &
Sportsclub Association
League of American Bicyclists
M+R Strategic Services
Marathon Kids
March of Dimes Foundation

Micah's Mission (Ministry to Improve
Childhood & Adolescent Health)
National Association of Chronic Disease
Directors
National Association of Community
Health Centers
National Association of County and City
Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of
Health
National Association of State EMS
Officials
National Alliance of State and Territorial
AIDS Directors
National Center for Bicycling &
Walking
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Coalition for Promoting
Physical Activity
National Disease Clusters Alliance
National Nursing Network Organization
National Recreation and Park
Association
National Research Center for Women &
Families
National Tuberculosis Controllers
Association
Nemours Health and Prevention Services
Partners for a Healthy Nevada
Physicians for Social Responsibility
The Praxis Project/Path
Prevent Blindness America
Prevention Institute

Research!America
Researchers Against Inactivity-Related Disorders
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Samuels & Associates
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Society for Public Health Education
South Carolina Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association

The California Endowment
The Federation of American Scientists
The New York Academy of Medicine
The Sports Karma Foundation
Trust for America's Health*
United States Water Fitness Association
University of Arkansas Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health
Washington Health Foundation
YMCA of the USA

**The Healthier America Project is organized by the Trust for America's Health.*

Contact Rich Hamburg, rhamburg@tfah.org, or Chrissie Juliano, cjuliano@tfah.org, to sign on.