

Healthy People 2010 and Beyond: Surgeon General calls on public to help improve America's health

By Jennifer Brooks

Closing the Gap, Healthy People 2010 and Beyond • August/September 1998

“Building the next generation of healthy people,” is more than just a theme, it is the nation's agenda for health improvement for the year 2010. By developing a set of national health targets—which include eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health—and holding forums for public response to those targets, U.S. health officials together with state and local officials and members of the private sector are setting goals to increase the quality and years of healthy life for all Americans.

The Healthy People initiative has been the nation's disease prevention and health promotion agenda for the last two decades. The initiative originated in a 1979 report by the U.S. Surgeon General which established the precedent for setting national health objectives and monitoring their progress over the decade. Healthy People 2010 includes new focus areas not previously included in Healthy People 2000, the nation's current set of objectives.

The Healthy People 2010 objectives will also encompass the government's new Initiative to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health, introduced by President Clinton earlier this year. The focus of the initiative is to close the gaps in health outcomes, particularly racial and ethnic disparities in diabetes, AIDS, heart disease, infant mortality, cancer screening and management, and immunizations.

In conjunction with the Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Initiative, the Healthy People 2010 objectives bring focus to disparities among racial and ethnic minorities, women, youth, the elderly, people of low income and education, and people with disabilities.

Healthy People 2010 will aim to promote healthy behaviors, promote healthy and safe communities, improve systems for personal and public health, and prevent and reduce diseases and disorders. The initiative will provide a tool for monitoring and tracking health status, health risks, and use of health services. The framework includes 26 focus areas and objectives for specific populations. The focus areas are:

- Physical Activity and Fitness;
- Nutrition;
- Tobacco Use;
- Educational & Community-Based Programs;
- Environmental Health;
- Food Safety;
- Injury/Violence Prevention;
- Occupational Safety and Health;
- Oral Health;
- Access to Quality Health Services;
- Family Planning;
- Maternal, Infant, and Child Health;
- Medical Product Safety;
- Public Health Infrastructure;*
- Health Communication;*
- Arthritis, Osteoporosis, and Chronic Back Conditions;*

- Cancer;
- Diabetes;
- Disability and Secondary Conditions;*
- Heart Disease and Stroke;
- HIV;
- Immunizations and Infectious Diseases;
- Mental Health and Mental Disorders;
- Respiratory Diseases;*
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases; and
- Substance Abuse.

*New focus areas.

The draft 2010 objectives and the criteria for leading health indicators will be released on September 15, 1998. The public can comment on the entire Healthy People 2010 framework, the new objectives, and the existing objectives, or propose new objectives until December 15, 1998. A final Healthy People 2010 document will be released in January 2000.

“Everyone, all of us, can participate in building the nation's health agenda for the 21st century,” according to Clay E. Simpson, Jr., MSPH, PhD, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has called a national gathering in Washington, D.C. of the Healthy People Consortium—an alliance of more than 600 organizations representing professional, voluntary, and business sectors, and state and territorial public health, mental health, substance abuse, and environmental agencies.

The Healthy People Consortium meeting will be held on November 12-13, 1998, at the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C. “This meeting will offer an opportunity to shape the direction of the nation's health agenda,” said Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher, who will be the keynote luncheon speaker on November 13. Regional meetings for Healthy People 2010 will take place around the country from October through December 1998.

The purpose of these meetings are to ensure that Healthy People will be useful at the national, state, and community levels by providing public forums to take comments on the draft document of Healthy People 2010 objectives.

Dr. Satcher urges the public to participate in developing 2010 objectives that will guide national health improvement into the 21st century. He said, “Let your voice be heard this fall.”

The overall development of Healthy People 2010 is guided by the Secretary's Council on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2010. Lead agencies within HHS are responsible for convening workgroups and incorporating the best science to draft the proposed objectives.

For more information on Healthy People 2010 developments, browse its Web site at: <http://web.health.gov/healthypeople>, or contact the HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at 1-800-367-4725. To order the Healthy People 2010 draft publication, call the Government Printing Office at (202) 512-1800 and request publication #0170010537. ❖

