

# REACH

## Reaching Economic Alternatives that Contribute to Health

### What is REACH?

REACH is an computer simulation exercise designed to let people learn about the social determinants of health. The object of the exercise is to develop an imaginary plan, either in the form of an employee benefits package or a set of publicly funded programs, to improve the social determinants of health for low income populations.



individuals make tradeoffs between competing needs for limited resources. REACH had been designed by researchers at the National Institutes of Health and the University of Michigan.

### Why a simulation exercise?

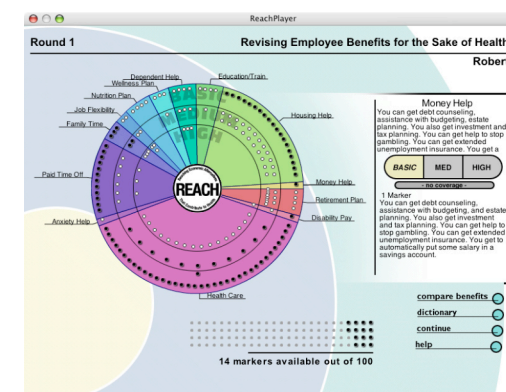
Many factors can contribute to improving health and it is often difficult for an employer or community to offer all of them. The simulation exercise format was chosen to make health choices less intimidating, less tedious, and more fun!

### How does it work?

REACH presents the challenge of picking among a full array of possible socio-economic options in the face of a fixed budget. Nine to twelve participants decide what to include and what to eliminate from their plans. Moving through four rounds of decision making, participants first decide alone, then in teams of three, next with all participants, and finally on their own again to create an array of possible benefits.

Players can choose from over a dozen types of services -- such as health care, retirement benefits, disability benefits, anxiety assistance, employment

accommodations, wellness and fitness programs, education and training – at up to three levels of coverage (basic, medium, or high). In each round, participants “test” their choices receiving randomly assigned “Health Event” and get a chance to discuss how well their benefit selection works them.



### What is the purpose of REACH?

Its goal is to help ordinary people understand the socio-economic factors that contribute to health, and helps employers and policy makers better understand the priorities of ordinary people.

As a research tool, REACH examines:

- The healthcare priorities of the people who play it
- The values that underlie preferences for health services

- **What are REACH's possibilities?**

REACH holds theoretical and practical promise.

- **The public** can learn how different factors can influence health.
- **Researchers** can learn more about how people think about factors that contribute to their health
- **Employers** can learn what is important to their employees.
- **Community-based and health care organizations** can use the information about priorities of their constituents to more effectively advocate for change.
- **Policy makers** can use the information to help define programs to improve population health.

Ultimately, REACH may help all of us design and select strategies that reflect our interests and priorities related to health.

People care deeply about their health. REACH makes thinking about factors that influence health understandable and even enjoyable. It can create

collaboration among the public, providers, and policy makers.

### **For further information about REACH contact:**

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