



# The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities



## About the Call to Action

### What is in the *Call to Action*?

- Consistent with other Surgeon General's *Calls to Action*, this document's emphasis is stimulating action based on science, and is supported by specific steps to achieve the goals of this Call to Action at the national, state and community levels.
- The *Call to Action* is based on a simple principle: Good health is necessary for persons with disabilities to secure the freedom to work, learn, and participate in their families and communities.
- It identifies the disparities in health and wellness services affecting persons with disabilities, suggesting ways to close gaps and re-balance the equation.
- It supports the goals of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative, to enable nearly 54 million Americans of all ages who have disabilities to experience full, rewarding, and healthy lives in their communities.
- The report is organized into four key sections that supply a public health approach framework to improve and enhance access to health care and wellness service needs for persons with disabilities:
  - *Section 1* introduces the concept of disability, delineates the difference between disability and illness, and introduces the challenges to health care and wellness promotion services faced by persons with disability.
  - *Section 2* describes nature of disability, who persons with disabilities are, and the range of disabilities affecting persons across all ages.
  - *Section 3* examines how achieving the goals of the *Call to Action* can help promote health and wellness for persons with disabilities, exploring issues and challenges of the individual consumer, health professionals, and the community.
  - *Section 4* delineates strategies for action that can lead to improved interaction, communication, and cooperation of an integrated health care system and related services programs.

### Who is the *Call to Action* for?

- *The Call to Action* calls on every member of society to see people with disabilities as equal counterparts, who can lead long, healthy, and productive lives. This includes health care providers, wellness and service professionals, community leaders and influencers in both public and private sectors, the media and entertainment industries, persons with disabilities, families and advocates for persons with disabilities, and the general public.