

Getting Started With the Indian Health Diabetes Best Practices

Q: I'm new to diabetes and SDPI (Special Diabetes Program for Indians) and have never used best practices. What exactly is a best practice?

A: A best practice is a recommendation or an approach based on evidence that has led to reliable results and improved patient outcomes. When a diabetes program implements a best practice, it can result in an *outstanding* and *measurable* improvement.

Here is a very simple, yet very effective example of a best practice recommendation. At every clinic visit, people with diabetes are asked to take off their shoes and socks in the exam room before they see their health care team. This simple step, which has made foot exams a routine practice in the Indian health system, has prevented thousands of lower limb amputations!

Q: How have diabetes programs used the Indian Health Diabetes Best Practices?

A: They have used the best practices to:

- identify strengths in diabetes services and resources
- find gaps in diabetes services or programs
- establish program priorities
- find best practice models that can work in their communities, and
- begin a work plan to develop their own local best practice models.

Q: Who should use the Indian Health Diabetes Best Practices?

A: People and programs at all levels of the Indian health system: IHS, Tribal, and Urban (I/T/U) – in clinical and community settings – are encouraged to use the diabetes best practices. They can review the best practice, see if it applies to their program, and adapt it to meet local needs. A best practice can be very useful when a program is considering new approaches to improving services and care.

Q: What lessons have SDPI grantees and others learned from using the best practices?

A: The best practices have helped teams to:

- assess what works and what doesn't work
- eliminate duplication of effort and resources, and
- significantly improve performance.

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Q: How many Indian Health Best Practices are there and where can I find the documents?

A: There are 20 documents. You can view and download each of them from this link: <http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Diabetes/index.cfm?module=toolsBPList>

Q: The diabetes best practices sound like they could help me and my staff improve our work in diabetes prevention and treatment. How do I find the information I need?

A: Each best practice follows the same basic outline that you will see in the Table of Contents. You can click on a topic in the Table of Contents and go right to that section of the best practice. You can go to specific pages or topics of a best practice by clicking on the “page” or “bookmark” symbols that appear in the left margin on your screen. Or, you can search for a word or phrase using the “binoculars.”

To make it easier for users to find the most important information, you will find the **key recommendations and key measures** for each best practice in the front of the document.

Q: What information will I find in each section of the best practices?

A: Here is an overview of the major sections of the best practices:

Part 1: Essential Element of Implementing the Best Practice

This brief overview will tell you: the purpose of the best practice; the target population; the intended users of the best practice; the definition of the topic; the goals for the best practice; a table of the key recommendations; and suggestions for planning for your program and evaluation including key action steps and the key measures table.

Part 2. Key Recommendations

This section provides details on the “why?” and “how?” of implementation of each Key Recommendation. It is essential to read and understand Part 2.

Part 3. Appendices, Tools and Resources

Part 3 provides the following information for most of Best Practices:

Appendices

Appendix A. Supplemental Information on the importance of the Best Practice, the benefits and risks, sustaining a best practice program and may include other topic-specific appendices.

Appendix B. Key Measures Example. This is an excellent resource to apply the process of selecting, implementing and evaluating a Best Practice in your community.

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Appendix C. Improving a diabetes program. A summary of how to improve programs that choose to implement a Best Practice.

Appendix D. Monitoring Progress and Outcomes. Provides examples of how to monitor the effects of implementing a Best Practice.

Additional topic-specific appendices may exist for some Best Practices.

Tools and Resources

This section provides links to patient and provider handouts, organizational tools, web-based resources, examples of current best practice programs, and additional contacts to help you plan and implement your program. You don't have to reinvent the wheel or do your own search for resources to help you plan and implement your best practice. They have been compiled and organized for you right in these best practices documents.

Part 4. References

References include journal articles, books, guidelines, and other resources containing supporting evidence for the best practice topic.