



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. Racial, ethnic and economic disparities serve to exacerbate the burden of disease. 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. The government must create strategies to eliminate health disparities and improve the health of all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. 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.

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

Commitments as of August 20, 2008

AARP	American Optometric Association
Active for Life	American Pharmacists Association
AIDS Action Council	American Public Health Association
Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics	American Red Cross
Alliance for Healthy Homes	American School Health Association
America Walks	American Tai Chi Association
American Academy of Pediatrics	Amputee Coalition of America
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance	Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
American Association for Homecare	Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Inc.	Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
American Cancer Society-Cancer Action Network	Association of Public Health Laboratories
American College of Clinical Pharmacy	Association of Schools of Public Health
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine	Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing
American College of Preventive Medicine	Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
American Diabetes Association	Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)	Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses
American Heart Association	Autism Society of America
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering	Bauman Family Foundation
American Lung Association	Breast Cancer Fund
American Nurses Association	California Communities Against Toxics
American Osteopathic Association	The California Endowment

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
Campaign to End Obesity
CDC Foundation
Center for Behavioral Epidemiology and
Community Health, Graduate School of
Public Health, San Diego State
University
Center for Biosecurity, University of
Pittsburgh Medical Center
The Center for Infectious Disease
Research and Policy, University of MN
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Childbirth Connection
CityMatCH
Clean Water Action
Commissioned Officers Association of
the U.S. Public Health Service
Commonweal
Defeat Diabetes Foundation
Directors of Health Promotion and
Education
Environmental Defense
Every Child By Two
FamilyCook Productions
Families Against Cancer & Toxics
Families in Search of Truth
The Federation of American Scientists
First Focus
Fit & Able Productions, Inc.
Florida Hospital Celebration Health
Georgia Public Health Association
Grantmakers In Health
Healthy Homes Collaborative

Hepatitis B Foundation
HIV Medicine Association
Home Safety Council
Immunization Action Coalition
Ingham County (MI) Health Department
Institute for Agriculture and Trade
Policy
Institute for Children's Environmental
Health
Institute of Food Technologists
International Health, Racquet, &
Sportsclub Association
International SPA Association
International SPA Association
Foundation
Leadership for Healthy Communities
League of American Bicyclists
Lose to Live Inc.
M+R Strategic Services
Marathon Kids
March of Dimes Foundation
Micah's Mission (Ministry to Improve
Childhood & Adolescent Health)
My Brother's Keeper, Inc.
National Alliance of State and Territorial
AIDS Directors
National Association for Public Health
Statistics and Information Systems
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 Center for Bicycling & Walking

National Center for Healthy Housing

National Coalition for LGBT Health

National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity

National Council on Aging

National Disease Clusters Alliance

The National Environmental Health Association

National Hispanic Medical Association

National Network of Public Health Institutes

National Nursing Centers Consortium

National Nursing Network Organization

National Physicians Alliance

National Public Health Information Coalition

National Recreation and Park Association

National Research Center for Women & Families

National Tuberculosis Controllers Association

The National Urban League

National WIC Association

Nemours Health and Prevention Services

The New York Academy of Medicine

New York State Nutrition Council

Partners for a Healthy Nevada

Partnership for Prevention

Physicians for Social Responsibility

The Praxis Project/Path

Prevent Blindness America

Prevention Institute

Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association

Public Health Foundation

Research!America

Researchers Against Inactivity-Related Disorders

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Samuels & Associates

Shaping America's Health

Society for Adolescent Medicine

Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research

Society for Public Health Education

The South Carolina Eat Smart, Move More Coalition

Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association

The Sports Karma Foundation

Trust for America's Health*

Tulane Center for Applied Environmental Public Health

United States Water Fitness Association

University of Arkansas Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health

Vegetarian Resource Group

Washington Health Foundation

Women's Sports Foundation

YBH (Youth Becoming Healthy) Project, Inc.

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.*