

The old saying “What you don’t know can’t hurt you” belies the need at the state and local level for **effective strategies to improve health and reduce the burden of health care on resources**. State and local health departments have a large (and growing) set of responsibilities in the delivery, finance, and research of public health. Increasingly, systematic reviews, which look at the entirety of the research produced to date and evidence of effectiveness, are being used to determine what works best. This in turn helps local decision makers make evidence-based choices about which interventions to support. The *Guide to Community Preventive Services (Community Guide)*, supported by CDC under the direction of the nonfederal Task Force on Community Preventive Services, a top independent advisory panel, has completed many systematic reviews of population-based prevention interventions that can be used by state and local health departments in their role as providers, insurers, and researchers.

### **Top 3 reasons why the *Community Guide* is relevant right now**

- Because the chronic disease burden is increasing, strategies must be population-based and focus on prevention, not treatment (proactive vs. reactive)
- Increasingly limited resources for public health mean that remaining funds must be applied in the most efficient way possible
- To date, over 100 evidence-based findings have been issued—the *Community Guide* is “user ready”

### **7 ways state and local health departments can use *Community Guide* findings to improve performance and maximize resources**

- ***In addressing drivers of Medicaid costs.*** Systematic review findings from the *Community Guide* identify proven effective strategies to address significant drivers of Medicaid costs (e.g., pneumococcal vaccination for those over 65, disease and case management for persons with diabetes)
- ***In identifying legislative and policy approaches that support prevention.*** Where program funds are limited, findings provide the most comprehensive evidence of effectiveness of legislative and policy approaches that support prevention (e.g., increasing the unit price on tobacco, school vaccination requirements, enhancing physical education in schools)
- ***As valuable tools in addressing health disparities.*** Population-based interventions transcend individual status, enabling those with limited or no access to routine preventive health care to obtain the benefits of prevention (e.g., mass media strategies for tobacco prevention as part of a comprehensive program, community water fluoridation)
- ***In refining state health plans.*** Planners can use findings to identify effective system practices that should be part of state or local employee health plans (e.g., client reminders for vaccination, proactive telephone support for tobacco cessation)
- ***In promoting or implementing effective worksite health promotion strategies.*** State and local health departments can implement and promote use of effective strategies to improve health in local government offices and among local employers (e.g., point of decision prompts encouraging stair use, smoking bans and restrictions)
- ***As a component of evidence-based decision making.*** *Community Guide* findings provide recommendations on intervention selection or research priorities, which complements other public health decision making tools that provide effectiveness information on clinical preventive services (e.g., Clinical Guide), assessment (e.g., MAPP and APEX-PH), and objective setting (e.g., Healthy People 2010)
- ***In developing proposals for additional resources or in shaping research priorities.*** Foundations and other funders are more likely to support applied research for an intervention with demonstrated effectiveness that needs to be tried locally, or basic research for an intervention where the Task Force found “insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness.” An area particularly needing further research, as demonstrated by Task Force findings, is culturally competent health care.

### **For More Information**

- [www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org) has links to all *Community Guide* publications as well as one page summaries on each intervention recommended to date (organized by topic)
- [communityguide@cdc.gov](mailto:communityguide@cdc.gov) is the e-mail address for questions about future reviews and other issues and for requests of hard copies of published materials