

Screening New Yorkers to Save Lives



“We made a commitment to apply evidence-based practices in our efforts to promote cancer screening on a population basis.”

Sheri Scavone, PT, EHSA
Director, Cancer Services Program
Bureau of Chronic Disease Services
New York State Department of Health

More Information

New York State Department of Health Cancer Services Program

www.health.ny.gov/cancerservicesprogram

The Community Guide: Task Force Recommendations on Cancer Prevention & Control

www.thecommunityguide.org/cancer/index.html

Screen for Life: National Colorectal Cancer Action Campaign, CDC

www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/sfl

National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, CDC

www.cdc.gov/cancer/ncccp/

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Cancer Services Program (CSP) provides breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screening to uninsured and underinsured men and women throughout New York State through a network of community-based organizations, partners, and providers.¹

To promote these services, CSP relies on findings and recommendations from the Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) found in *The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide)*. *The Community Guide* is an instrumental part of CSP's comprehensive approach to educating partners, community providers, local health departments, and community-based organizations about what works to increase screenings for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers.

Cancer, a public health priority for New York

Cancer is one of the most common chronic diseases in New York, and is second only to heart disease as the leading cause of death. Each year, more than 100,000 New Yorkers are diagnosed, and nearly one in four deaths in the state are due to cancer.^{2,3} Detecting cancer early, when it is most easily treated, is essential in reducing the state's burden of cancer-related death and disease.

The CSP recognized this issue and identified cancer prevention as a priority area for local health departments, hospitals, and community partners. The goals outlined in the state's *Prevention Agenda for the Healthiest State* include significantly reducing the rate of deaths due to breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers by 2013.

Expanding cancer screening efforts

The NYSDOH has operated a cancer screening program since the mid-1990s. In 2009, NYSDOH CSP received funding to increase colorectal cancer screening among all New Yorkers through population-based strategies. The CSP began promoting *The Community Guide* to partners, providers, and community-based organizations to maximize the reach of their efforts to increase cancer screening. *The Community Guide* helped focus some of the approaches and expand activity beyond screening.

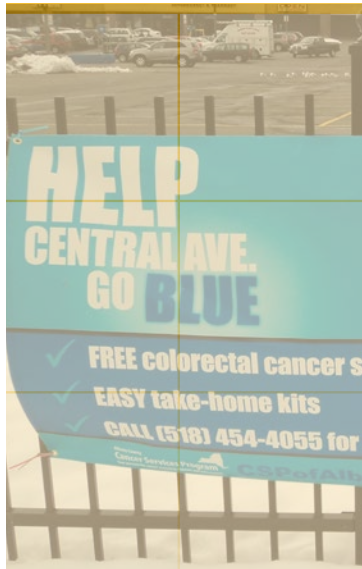
Staff at the state health department used *The Community Guide* with partners and contractors across the state to describe evidence-based strategies for increasing screening. The CSP used the following Task Force findings and recommendations to increase cancer screenings:

- Client reminders
- Small media
- Mass media*
- Reducing structural barriers*

Increasing awareness of colorectal cancer screening

To make the most of resources and to ensure consistent messaging, NYSDOH used print and broadcast public service announcements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Screen for Life: National Colorectal Cancer Action Campaign*.⁴ The goal was to saturate local media channels with messages about the

*The Task Force issued a finding of “insufficient evidence” for mass media when used alone and for its unique contribution when used in combination with other interventions to increase screening for breast, cervical, or colorectal cancers. The Task Force also issued a finding of “insufficient evidence” for using approaches that reduce structural barriers to increase screening for cervical cancer. This does not mean that these interventions do not work. It means that more research is needed for the Task Force to determine if they are effective. The Task Force encourages those who use interventions with insufficient evidence to evaluate their efforts.



www.thecommunityguide.org

What is *The Community Guide*?

The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide) is an essential resource for people who want to know what works in public health. It provides evidence-based findings and recommendations about public health interventions and policies to improve health and promote safety.

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force)—an independent, nonfederal, unpaid body of public health and prevention experts—bases its findings and recommendations on systematic reviews of the scientific literature. With oversight from the Task Force, scientists and subject-matter experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conduct these reviews in collaboration with a wide range of government, academic, policy, and practice-based partners.



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importance of getting screened and to complement local and regional education and screening campaigns, such as New York's *Main Streets Go Blue* initiative.

Blue is the national awareness color for colorectal cancer. *Main Streets Go Blue* is a campaign in which retail businesses show support by decorating their stores with blue string lights, posters, flyers, and decals. They also host screening events to provide colorectal cancer screening for uninsured and underinsured men and women. The screening events, usually held in March during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, connect hundreds of residents to local cancer screening and treatment services.

Reminding clients to be screened

NYSDOH also used a reminder system for clients due for colorectal cancer screening. The automated voice system delivered an educational message, screening reminder, and an option to be transferred to a local CSP screening provider to schedule a test. "Many of our screening providers are not able to make phone calls to all clients due for screening each month; some send letters or postcard reminders instead," explains Elise Collins, director of the Partner Relations and Communications Unit and colorectal cancer coordinator at NYSDOH. By providing the patient reminder service, NYSDOH was able to add value to local screening efforts and help partners encourage more of their clients to get screened.

Reducing barriers to breast and cervical cancer screening

The rural nature of the Adirondacks makes it difficult for residents to get to sites that offer life-saving cancer screening tests, such as mammography and Pap tests. One strategy NYSDOH used was to reduce structural barriers to cancer screening for women, such as transportation or inconvenient clinic hours. Patient navigators, care coordinators who guide patients through the complex health care system, established processes to conduct telephone screening assessments among patients of a 13-site federally qualified health center and then help them get to screening services. The ongoing goal is to reduce barriers to routine screening tests.

Positive impact on local communities

Success was seen in both CSP screening programs. Over a period of 3 months, New York's interactive voice reminder system reached 64 percent of current clients who were due for a colorectal screening over 7 months. Fourteen percent of all clients called who listened to the entire message asked to be transferred to their local CSP screening provider to schedule a screening. Within 4 months of receipt of the final reminder call, 5 percent of all clients called had completed colorectal cancer screening. The patient navigator program in the Adirondacks contacted about 1,300 women over a 13-month period.

Lessons Learned

- **Use *The Community Guide* to expand current services.** NYSDOH received funding to expand their existing cancer screening program. Working with partners, providers, and community-based organizations, NYSDOH used *The Community Guide* to develop promotion strategies that increased awareness.
- **Incorporate existing tools and resources into your strategy.** A wealth of public health tools and resources are available at little or no cost. NYSDOH customized a national cancer screening campaign and media materials for local efforts, saving the department valuable time and money.
- **Provide resources that complement partners' activities.** Although community partners are essential to the success of any prevention strategy, they are often understaffed and underfunded. Providing resources to increase their capacity can create a "win-win" situation that expands the reach of their services.

¹New York State Department of Health, Cancer Screening and Prevention. www.health.ny.gov/diseases/cancer/screening/. Accessed on March 28, 2012.

²New York State Department of Health, Cancer Incidence and Mortality for New York State, 2004-2008. www.health.ny.gov/statistics/cancer/registry/vol1/v1mys.htm. Accessed on March 28, 2012.

³New York State Department of Health, Cancer. www.health.ny.gov/diseases/cancer/. Accessed on March 28, 2012.

⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Screen for Life: National Colorectal Cancer Action Campaign. www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/sfl/. Accessed on March 28, 2012.