When communities need to know how to protect and improve their population’s health, they turn to The Community Guide, a collection of evidence-based recommendations and findings from the Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force makes evidence-based recommendations about the effectiveness and economics of public health programs, services, and other interventions used in real-world settings—such as communities, worksites, schools, faith-based organizations, military bases, public health clinics and departments, and integrated healthcare systems. The findings are not mandates, but rather a menu of options from which decision makers can make informed decisions for the health of their community.

Value of the Task Force and The Community Guide


Decision makers can rely on The Community Guide when deciding how to best use limited resources to tackle some of the most pressing health challenges facing their communities, such as obesity, tobacco use, and unintentional injuries (see table below). Communities can skip the step of researching intervention approaches and feel confident about their options, knowing the Task Force recommendations are based on credible, rigorous, systematic reviews that consider all relevant, high-quality evidence.

Task Force findings help researchers, evaluators, and funding organizations prioritize areas of study.

Researchers and program evaluators can focus their research on evidence gaps that are identified by the Task Force. This helps to direct research funding toward critical gaps in public health literature.

About the Task Force

The Task Force is an independent, nonfederal panel of 15 public health and prevention experts who represent a broad range of scientific, practice, and policy expertise in community prevention services, public health, health promotion, and disease prevention. Members are appointed by the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC’s Community Guide Branch provides administrative, scientific, and technical support for the Task Force.

The Task Force has findings for more than 230 intervention approaches in the following 21 topic areas:

- Adolescent Health
- Asthma Control
- Cancer Prevention and Control
- Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Control
- Diabetes Prevention and Control
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Excessive Alcohol Consumption
- Health Communication and Health Information Technology
- Health Equity
- HIV/AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and Teen Pregnancy
- Mental Health
- Motor Vehicle-Related Injury Prevention
- Nutrition
- Obesity Prevention and Control
- Oral Health
- Physical Activity
- Pregnancy Health
- Tobacco Use and Second-Hand Smoke Exposure
- Vaccination
- Violence Prevention
- Worksite Health
How the Task Force Develops Recommendations

Our recommendations and findings are based on a rigorous, replicable, systematic review process that involves the following three steps.

Step 1: Prioritize Topic Areas and Intervention Approaches

The Task Force uses a multi-stage process to identify and prioritize future review topics. A prioritization committee gathers nominations from a wide range of stakeholders, aligns the topics with Healthy People 2020 topic areas, and uses established criteria to rank and prioritize them. Next, the committee develops a portfolio of community-based intervention approaches within selected topic areas and prioritizes them for systematic review.

Criteria for Prioritizing Review Topics
1. Burden of disease and preventability
2. Presence of important health disparities
3. Alignment with national efforts (e.g., Healthy People 2020)
4. Degree to which the Task Force findings would be relevant and helpful to the field
5. Stakeholder interests
6. Ability to complete enough reviews within a reasonable time period to provide users with an adequate menu of options for addressing the health topic
7. Balance across public health topics
8. Complementary work of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, and other bodies that provide guidance on addressing health issues

Future Topics for Review
In 2015, the Task Force used the process outlined to prioritize topic areas for review through 2020

- Cardiovascular Disease
- Environmental Health
- Injury Prevention
- Mental Health
- Obesity (includes Nutrition)
- Older Adults
- Physical Activity
- Sleep Health
- Social Determinants of Health
- Substance Abuse (e.g., Prescription Drug Overdose)
- Violence Prevention

Step 2: Conduct Systematic Reviews

Systematic reviews are conducted in accordance with the highest international standards, using a transparent and replicable methodology that accounts for the complexities of real-world public health interventions.
Systematic review science teams, coordinated by CDC scientists, evaluate the strengths and limitations of all relevant, high-quality evidence to assess whether programs, services, and other interventions are effective in improving health at the population level. Examples of these include self-measured blood pressure monitoring programs, interventions engaging community health workers for diabetes prevention, and enhanced school-based physical activity interventions.

The team also determines whether findings are applicable to different U.S. population groups and settings; highlights possible harms, potential benefits, and implementation considerations; and identifies evidence gaps and areas for future research.

Public health professionals regularly look for information about the cost and economic value of Task Force-recommended interventions, as this information is critical for decision making. A separate team of economists conducts systematic economic analyses for recommended intervention approaches. They look at cost, cost-effectiveness, and cost-benefit analyses to provide public health professionals with information they need to make decisions and allocate funding.

**Step 3: Issue Task Force Findings**

Systematic reviews are presented to the Task Force members during public meetings held in Atlanta. CPSTF members methodically review and discuss the evidence, consider input from stakeholders, and issue a recommendation or finding based on the strength and consistency of the effectiveness evidence. CPSTF findings do not mandate compliance or spending.

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### Identify Evidence Gaps

- Systematic review teams identify critical gaps in the evidence that limit the Task Force’s ability to determine if an intervention approach works, how it might affect populations differently, or whether there are economic benefits.
- Researchers can fill evidence gaps through a combination of studies and real-world evaluations. Agencies and organizations that fund research highlight these identified evidence gaps as priority areas.
- Evidence gaps for each review are highlighted on The Community Guide website and featured in the Task Force’s annual reports to Congress.

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### Our Recommendations and Findings

The Task Force examines the evidence and makes one of the following findings:

- **Recommended** – There is strong or sufficient evidence showing the intervention approach is effective at improving health.

- **Insufficient evidence** – There is not enough evidence to determine if the intervention approach is effective. This does not mean that the intervention does not work. It means that additional research and evaluation are needed to determine whether or not the intervention is effective.

- **Recommended against** – Evidence demonstrates the intervention approach is ineffective or harmful.
How We Get Input from Others

The Task Force engages key stakeholders in all aspects of its work.

The Task Force works closely with partners to develop and disseminate recommendations.

Subject Matter Experts

Systematic review science teams include Task Force members, official Liaisons, federal and nonfederal scientists, practitioners, policymakers, and representatives of other stakeholders such as businesses, voluntary health organizations, and professional organizations.

Liaisons to the Community Preventive Services Task Force

The Task Force is supported by 32 Liaisons that represent state and local public health departments, the U.S. Armed Forces, federal agencies, health care professionals, and other national organizations invested in America’s health. Liaisons participate in Task Force meetings; serve on systematic review teams; represent the views, concerns, and needs of their organizations and constituents; and disseminate findings to their members and constituents.

Task Force Liaisons

Partners

The Task Force partners with numerous organizations to help prioritize areas for study, strengthen the review process, disseminate recommendations, and support implementation of recommended interventions. Partners include CDC programs and other federal agencies, organizations, policymakers, public health professionals, providers, practitioners (e.g., health department staff, educators, city planners), scientists, and businesses.
How We Disseminate Recommendations

We work with partners to develop and disseminate products to reach stakeholders.

Reaching Audiences

The Community Guide resources are disseminated through numerous channels, including the following:

- **The Community Guide Website** ([www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org)) – The site includes all Task Force recommendations, easy-to-use tools to implement Task Force recommendations, effectiveness and economic evidence, success stories, and audio clips featuring experts and practitioners who have implemented Task Force recommendations.

- **Email** – Subscribers select topic areas of interest to receive relevant notices about Task Force recommendations and findings, upcoming Task Force meetings, and new products.

- **Social Media @CPSTF** regularly updates Twitter followers with news about Task Force recommendations and resources.

- **Presentations** – Task Force evidence reviews and findings are shared during professional meetings, invited talks, and webinar presentations.

Enhancing Reach Through Collaboration

The Task Force works closely with partners to expand its reach and impact on public health.

- **Peer-Reviewed Journals** – Recommendation statements and evidence summaries are published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, and other respected journals.

- **Partners** – CDC programs and Task Force Liaisons use their own channels, such as newsletter articles, social media posts, and websites, to disseminate information about Task Force recommendations.
Implementing What Works

We work with partners to help communities implement Task Force recommendations.

Task Force recommendations are translated into practical actions that can be included in public health programs. Implementation tools, training, and technical assistance are available to health professionals, agencies, and organizations looking to implement Task Force recommendations.

- **Trainings** – The Community Guide provides trainings to public health partners, boards of health, community-based organizations, and federal agencies who provide guidance and support to communities across the nation.

- **Implementation tools** – The Community Guide website has implementation tools, such as a comparison tool that helps users select which intervention approaches meet their specific needs.

- **Crosswalks** – The Community Guide website offers connections with other resources to help users find information they need.
  - Task Force recommendations are matched with Healthy People 2020 objectives to help users select evidence-based approaches and justify decisions for how they intend to meet their goals.
  - The Community Guide website offers a comprehensive crosswalk tool to help health departments identify which Task Force recommendations can be helpful to them when applying for national accreditation.
  - Connections between The Community Guide and Cancer P.L.A.N.E.T. help users find model cancer prevention programs they can use to implement Task Force recommendations or make evidence-based decisions for their community.

**Implementation Spotlight: Cardiovascular Disease Prevention**

In 2017, CDC’s Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention published *Best Practices for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Programs: A Guide to Effective Health Care System Interventions and Community Programs Linked to Clinical Services*. This guide, complete with supporting materials and resources, was created to help health departments, decision makers, and public health professionals choose effective and sustainable strategies to prevent cardiovascular disease.

Of the eight highlighted strategies, five are Task Force-recommended:

- **Team-Based Care to Improve Blood Pressure**
- **Self-Measured Blood Pressure Monitoring Interventions for Improved Blood Pressure Control (When Used Alone or When Combined with Additional Support)**
- **Interventions Engaging Community Health Workers**
- **Clinical Decision-Support Systems (CDSS)**
- **Reducing Out-of-Pocket Costs for Cardiovascular Disease Preventive Services for Patients with High Blood Pressure and High Cholesterol**
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services established the Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) in 1996 to complement the work of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF).

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force provides evidence-based recommendations for healthcare professionals and decision makers on effective clinical preventive services. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality provides administrative, scientific, and technical support to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Together, the task forces identify effective, evidence-based preventive interventions to improve health in clinical and community settings across the country. The two task forces work together to ensure there is no duplication of effort.

The Community Preventive Services Task Force also complements the work of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which develops recommendations for the routine administration of vaccines to children and adults.

For More Information About the Community Preventive Services Task Force

To learn more about the Community Preventive Services Task Force, visit www.thecommunityguide.org or send an email to communityguide@cdc.gov.