

Our Health is California's Health

Setting the Health Agenda for 2010 & Beyond

Overview

The health of Californians is vital to the health of California. The recent passage of national health reform legislation and the subsequent need for implementation in California creates an opportunity to develop a comprehensive approach to improve the health and safety of all Californians. Because California is facing unprecedented challenges, policy decisions need to be focused on protecting quality of life, encouraging innovation, and laying the groundwork for sustainability. A healthy population is more productive, reduces the burden on the health and social service systems, and is better able to take advantage of the opportunities California affords.

This document reflects the shared thinking of the endorsers—leading organizations across the state focused on public health and health care access and quality. We hope to garner the support of stakeholders throughout California to move these recommendations forward.

Three core principles should be considered in examining all policies, decisions, and opportunities in order to maximize effectiveness and positive impact on health and safety:

- ❖ **Equity and Fairness:** A commitment is needed to promote equal opportunities (including economic, housing, education, and services) and inclusive decision-making and development processes that support health and safety for all Californians—in particular for communities that are marginalized based on factors such as race, ethnicity, economic status, sexual orientation, gender, age, immigration status, or geographic location.
- ❖ **Effective Governance:** In order to prioritize and fund initiatives that improve community health, state government must be collaborative, efficient, responsive to community priorities, and accountable for appropriate measures of success.
- ❖ **Health in All Policies:** Improving the health of California communities requires the concerted efforts of all sectors. Policies and initiatives in every sector (e.g., transportation, housing, and development) should be analyzed in terms of their impact on the health of communities and should be responsive to factors that affect health.

Now more than ever, these core principles must be embraced when analyzing state policy options. In this document, these principles are embedded in specific recommendations for action across three areas of health: 1) promoting safety in homes and communities, 2) preventing chronic disease, and 3) health care access and quality. Although these topics are addressed separately below, the ultimate goal is not to select from a discrete set of options but rather to develop a comprehensive, multi-sector approach to address multiple issues and foster overall health.



Endorsements

American Lung Association in California
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment,
Advocacy and Leadership

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health
Forum

Berkeley Media Studies Group

California Black Women's Health
Project

California Center for
Public Health Advocacy

California Food Policy Advocates

California Pan-Ethnic Health
Network

California Public Health
Association—North

Center for Civic Partnerships

Center for Health
Improvement

Children Now

County Health Executives Association of
California

Harm Reduction Coalition

Human Impact Partners

Insure the Uninsured Project

Latino Coalition for a Healthy
California

Latino Health Access

Lifelong Medical Care

Local Government
Commission

Partnership for the Public's Health

PolicyLink

Prevention Institute

Public Health Institute

Regional Asthma Management &
Prevention

St. John's Well Child and Family Centers



SYNOPSIS

A comprehensive approach to promoting safety addresses both intentional injuries (i.e., violence) and unintentional injuries (e.g., traffic-related injuries, falls, burns, drowning, and poisonings including drug overdose). Injury is the number one cause of death and disability among persons aged 1 to 44 in California—responsible for 17,000 deaths and 2 million emergency department treatments annually—and has an annual economic impact of \$67 billion (medical and non-medical expenses). While injuries affect everyone, women, people of color, and low-income populations are particularly vulnerable. Robust injury prevention efforts are essential to closing this health-equity gap and improving health for all.

Investing in effective community violence prevention strategies will reduce violence and yield other important community outcomes, including lowering rates of chronic disease by removing barriers to physical activity. California has the opportunity to lead the way in injury prevention by, for instance, promoting transportation strategies that reduce injuries, increasing opportunities for safe physical activity, improving access to community resources, and supporting economic development and local jobs.

Promoting Safety in Homes and Communities

Recommendations

1. Invest in the development, implementation, and coordination of sustainable approaches to preventing violence that will have the greatest impact in neighborhoods, schools, and homes.

- ❖ Strengthen community-building efforts in neighborhoods, particularly where violence is pervasive.
- ❖ Support prevention efforts by instituting violence prevention programs in all schools; reducing young children's exposure to violence in homes and communities; increasing the availability of meaningful and safe work; improving the built environment to increase social and commercial activity and "eyes on the street" throughout the day; and reducing the availability of unhealthy and unsafe products—including weapons, tobacco, and alcohol—through zoning and advertising restrictions.
- ❖ Strengthen intervention efforts through increased outreach in highly impacted neighborhoods, support for treatment of mental health and substance abuse problems, and programs to promote mental health and prevent substance abuse among youth.
- ❖ Provide violence prevention training to service providers, as well as state and local government officials.

2. Address leading causes of unintentional injury and align state action in support of prevention efforts.

- ❖ Develop interagency strategic plans and benchmarks to reduce injuries including burns, falls, drowning, and workplace safety.
- ❖ Promote safe travel for all by reducing speed limits, advancing Complete Streets policies, and reducing reliance on automobiles by promoting alternative modes of transportation (public transit, walking, bicycling).
- ❖ Support expanded data and regulations related to drug, chemical, and environmental protections including increasing awareness of risks, promoting safer chemical alternatives for industrial and consumer use, and increasing restrictions on leading causes of poisoning (including prescription drugs).
- ❖ Support health hazard assessments and actions on known and probable hazards (e.g., pesticides, lead paint, workplace exposures).

3. Enhance state government support of efforts to prevent all injuries.

- ❖ Establishing a mechanism for multi-sector collaboration in state government to address priority injury issues.
- ❖ Increase flexibility of funding streams in support of local injury prevention efforts.
- ❖ Establish a statewide multicultural and multilingual communications campaign to help build and sustain injury prevention efforts.

Preventing Chronic Disease

Recommendations

1. Promote effective government practice to foster healthy community environments.

- ❖ Support efforts of the Strategic Growth Council and its Health in All Policies Task Force to implement collaborative state agency and department actions to support environmental, equity, and health goals.
- ❖ Build local public health infrastructure and capacity to work collaboratively and innovatively.

2. Expand access to healthy foods and beverages and reduce the harmful impact of highly processed foods.

- ❖ Ensure all Californians have access to safe drinking water including making free tap water available during meal service at all schools and using state resources to provide safe tap water in low-income communities.
- ❖ Simplify the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program application and retention process in California, including promoting out-of-office reporting systems and eliminating mandatory fingerprinting, to increase the percent of eligible households participating and bring more federal dollars to the state.
- ❖ Institute healthy food and beverage standards and expand access to childcare, school, and after-school food programs.
- ❖ Advance strategies, including fees and taxes, to reduce the consumption of sweetened beverages.
- ❖ Establish a Healthy Food Financing Fund to support grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other healthy food retail in underserved communities.
- ❖ Support sustainable, local and regional food systems by preserving farmland, creating regional infrastructure for processing and distribution, and investing in new and existing farmers to get healthy products to market.

3. Support increased physical activity for children, adults, and seniors.

- ❖ Facilitate shared use of public facilities (e.g., school playgrounds, parks) and implement strategies to make parks, routes to school, and communities safe so that all community members have opportunities to engage in safe physical activity.
- ❖ Support the implementation of Complete Streets policies to promote public transportation, walking, and bicycling as accessible means of transportation.
- ❖ Ensure that all schools meet or exceed requirements for minutes of quality physical education; encourage the recruitment of qualified physical education teachers.

4. Improve air quality.

- ❖ Support AB 32, SB 375, and ambitious targets for greenhouse gas reduction.
- ❖ Implement regulatory actions and other incentives to reduce exposure to diesel emissions, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and other pollutants, especially in communities disproportionately affected by environmental toxins.
- ❖ Reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke by increasing tobacco tax revenue, regulating advertising (particularly to minors and in low-income communities), and restricting tobacco use in workplaces and public venues.



SYNOPSIS

When communities have clean air and water, well-maintained parks, safe places for people to walk and play, vibrant retail, and healthy food systems, all residents benefit and chronic diseases can be prevented.

One in three California adults has a chronic disease such as diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease, or cancer, and about 75% of health care costs are due to chronic conditions. Exposure to secondhand smoke, insufficient access to healthy foods and safe places to exercise, and tobacco and alcohol marketing are responsible for significant illness, disability, and premature death. Inequities based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, region, and economic status mean that certain communities bear more of the chronic disease burden and have far less access to resources. Policies and practices that foster healthy food and activity environments and clean air and water can help to address health inequities and the surge in chronic diseases.

California has an opportunity to lead the nation in reducing chronic diseases and health inequities, just as it has led the nation in reducing tobacco consumption, eliminating junk food and soda in schools, and supporting Complete Streets policies.



SYNOPSIS

The passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) offers an opportunity to transform health care coverage and delivery for all Californians. Currently, nearly one in four Californians is uninsured (24.3%) and there are additional barriers to access based on geography, language and culture, and economic resources. Questions about overall health care quality persist; for example, patients are estimated to receive recommended care about 55% of the time. The various components of ACA will potentially expand coverage; strengthen the primary care infrastructure; provide consumer protections; and emphasize disease prevention and health promotion.

To fulfill the promise and potential of health reform in California, a number of key considerations and policy actions will be needed, along with strong leadership at the state and local levels.

Health Care Access & Quality

Recommendations

1. Expand access to coverage and strengthen the delivery system to ensure access to quality services for Californians.

- ❖ Support a new health insurance exchange, that is transparent, consumer-friendly, culturally and linguistically accessible, and structured to negotiate for the best value (price and covered benefits).
- ❖ Expand eligibility for children, adults, and aging adults through the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs.
- ❖ Support community clinics, public hospitals, and other safety-net providers of care for the uninsured and underinsured.

2. Make strategic investments in health information technology.

- ❖ Ensure that all components of the health system are able to monitor quality and health disparities.
- ❖ Support information being available across providers to improve quality, safety, and efficiency, and chronic disease management.

3. Ensure that the future health workforce reflects California's diverse languages and cultures, includes a wide range of primary care providers, and is distributed according to need and available throughout the state.

4. Build on the premise that everyone should have access to primary care and a medical home.

- ❖ Support appropriate referrals to specialty and acute care.
- ❖ Embrace a comprehensive view of health that includes mental health, dental and vision, complementary health, chronic-care management, reproductive health and contraception, and home, work, and community-based care.
- ❖ Improve integration of the continuum of care and caregiver support for aging adults.

5. Encourage health care organizations to adopt practices and policies that promote prevention (e.g., healthy campuses, supporting the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding, and following Preventive Services Task Force guidelines).

California's policymakers and health stakeholders are encouraged to:

- ❖ Support the core principles of equity and fairness, effective governance, and health in all policies.
- ❖ Use these principles as a lens to evaluate and discuss health issues.
- ❖ Advance the recommendations for improvement in: Health Care Access and Quality, Promoting Safety in Homes and Communities, and Preventing Chronic Disease.
- ❖ Share these principles and recommendations broadly.