Let us try to offer help before we have to offer therapy. That is to say, let’s see if we can prevent being ill by trying to offer a love of prevention before illness.

-Maya Angelou, poet
Table of Contents

Our Vision and Mission  4
Our Guiding Principles  5
Our Goals  6
Our Approach  7
Our Strategies  9
Our Outcomes  10
Our Measures  11
Our Theory of Change  12
Our Fundamentals  13
Overview of our Work  17

We are still standing on the bank of the river, rescuing people who are drowning. We have not gone to the head of the river to keep them from falling in. That is the 21st century task.

- Gloria Steinem, feminist and political activist
Our Vision and Mission

Prevention is a systematic process that promotes health, safety, and wellbeing and reduces the frequency and/or severity of illness and injury. Our prevention approach emphasizes:

- Transforming community environments to prevent problems from occurring before the onset of symptoms or risk of injury;
- Elevating equity in health, safety, and wellbeing outcomes; and
- Prioritizing communities that are most vulnerable to harm and communities that are experiencing the greatest harm.

Since 1997, we have been focused on reducing preventable illnesses and injuries, increasing the length of time that people are healthy (their health span), and closing health gaps that exist across race, socioeconomic status, and gender. Our vision serves as our north star and this strategic framework as our pathways for getting there.

Our vision:
All people experience their full potential for health, safety, and wellbeing across the life course through thriving, equitable communities.

No epidemic has ever been resolved by attention to treatment of the affected individual.

- Dr. George Albee, pioneer in clinical psychology

Health: the physical, mental, and spiritual condition that allows people to thrive and live fulfilling lives

Safety: freedom from violence and the threat of violence

Wellbeing: experiencing levels of hope and aspiration, belonging and connection, trust, dignity, safety and control of destiny which are reflected in vibrant mental and behavioral health

Health span: the length of time that people are healthy

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Health span:
the length of time that people are healthy

Our mission:
To build prevention and health equity into key federal, state, local, and organizational policies, practices and actions to ensure that the places where all people live, work, play and learn foster health, safety, and wellbeing.
Our Guiding Principles

Equity in health: Everyone deserves a fair and just opportunity to be healthy. We recognize that historical and current day policies, practices, and procedures have produced inequitable opportunities for health, safety, and wellbeing—including across racial/ethnic lines, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, and gender and gender identity. We advance strategies to reverse or ameliorate these impacts and create equitable opportunities for health. We embed health equity considerations and outcomes into all of our work.

Community voice and power: Community voice and power is essential for achieving and sustaining equitable health outcomes. Communities have deep knowledge, assets, intuition, culture, and skills which constitute the contextual and experiential evidence that can drive solutions. Our work is informed by community, and we work to ensure that community voice not only shapes our work but also informs research, policy, and philanthropic priorities through our influence.

Interdependence: Everyone’s health, safety, and wellbeing are mutually reliant on the health, safety, and wellbeing of others. We are only as healthy as the least healthy member of our community, and their vulnerability makes us all more vulnerable. Each person has worth and value and deserves the opportunity to be healthy. We reject divisiveness; it is corrosive, ignores our interdependence, and tears apart the conditions that support health for everyone. We also emphasize shared responsibility and the importance of collective action to achieve health.

Strengths-based: We honor the strengths and assets of communities and cultures. Rather than focusing solely on the reduction of risks for poor health, we support communities in elevating their own strengths and resilience. People and communities have inherent assets that support health and communities have developed resilience—the ability/capacity of a community to adapt, recover, and thrive, even in the face of adversity.

Essential: Prevention always matters, and the preponderance of evidence confirms that prevention improves health outcomes, saves lives, and improves the quality of life. We can’t just wait for a crisis or epidemic to occur because too many people and communities will suffer needlessly. Many health-related problems can be prevented before there are symptoms. We elevate prevention as the most effective way to promote health for multiple generations.

Rigor and accountability: We stand for high-quality prevention, which is informed by the best available research evidence, contextual evidence, and experiential evidence. We integrate an understanding of multiple forms of evidence throughout our work and apply rigor to all that we do. We are committed to high quality and to holding ourselves and others accountable for the best possible health outcomes.

Health and health disparities are embedded in larger historical, geographic, sociocultural, economic, and political contexts. Changes in a broad range of public policies are likely to be central to effectively addressing racial disparities.

- David Williams, Harvard public health professor
Our Goals

We have four interrelated goals:

**Health, safety, and wellbeing**
Expand the notion of health to go beyond healthcare or just the absence of illness and injury to understanding it as the physical, mental, and spiritual condition—inclusive of safety and wellbeing—that allows people to thrive and live fulfilling lives.

**Equity**
Ensure that all communities—based on shared geography and/or identity—have a fair and just opportunity to achieve health, including by addressing barriers like poverty, discrimination, and racism, and by utilizing gender- and culturally-informed approaches.

**Community Focus**
Expand approaches to address community conditions that influence health, safety, and wellbeing, in addition to approaches that focus on individuals.

**Upstream Prevention**
Direct attention and resources upstream to emphasize strategies that promote health, safety, and wellbeing as a complement to intervention, services, and treatment.

We see each of these goals at the end of a continuum. Even as we recognize the value of efforts along each continuum, we focus on expanding efforts at the right end of each continuum. These goals are too often misunderstood or overlooked and represent a critical opportunity to achieve population outcomes.

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The absence of illness and injury ➔ Health, safety, and wellbeing ➔ Equity
One size fits all ➔ Community Focus
Individual focus ➔ Upstream Prevention
Treatment and services
Our Approach

We never stop championing prevention and health equity because we know that health, safety, and wellbeing are among the most important things for all individuals, families, and communities. Along the way, we counter challenges because we also know that an important and effective way to experience health, safety, and wellbeing is through high quality community-level prevention. Even as prevention is trivialized or misunderstood, we help policymakers, decisionmakers, professionals, and the general public understand how important it is and how to implement high-quality prevention measures. Here’s how:

1. **We innovate** prevention and equity solutions that support community health, safety, and wellbeing and advance the field of prevention.

2. **We build capacity** for effective prevention and health equity, developing strategies that are actionable and practical.

3. **We advocate for prevention and health equity policy and systems change**, improving conditions for children, families and communities.

4. **We champion prevention and health equity**, amplifying opportunities and generating momentum.

In everything we do, we are deeply committed to partnership and collaboration. Our ability to innovate, for example, emerges in our work alongside communities and organizations across the country that are surfaceing problems and applying our tools and methods to approach challenges in new ways. As we build capacity, we align with partners to support implementation and achieve change. We lead and collaborate to advance policy and systems change. And we champion community successes and developments in the public health field to inspire government, philanthropy, and community leaders to build momentum toward effective prevention and equitable health, safety, and wellbeing outcomes.

**1. We innovate prevention and equity solutions that support community health, safety, and wellbeing and advance the field of prevention.**

**The challenge:** Communities want effective solutions.

**Our approach:** Drawing upon what has worked in other fields, we systematically apply lessons learned to address emerging needs to improve safety, health, and wellbeing.

**The challenge:** Many organizations work on single topics or interventions, focusing on issues after symptoms or risks occur.

**Our approach:** We work collaboratively and across multiple topics, emphasizing primary prevention—upstream approaches to preventing illness and injury before they occur—and promoting health, safety, and wellbeing through community change. Time and again, we have seen that a good solution solves multiple problems.

2. **We build capacity for effective prevention and health equity, developing strategies that are actionable and practical.**

**The challenge:** People agree that prevention is important, but they aren’t sure what to do or how to do it, and resources and funding streams rarely incentivize prevention.
Our approach: We advance actionable solutions to complex and pressing health and safety problems. We create tools and frameworks, facilitate strategy development, and build capacity to make prevention practical and achievable, and we work with our partners to tailor solutions that meet local, state, and regional needs.

The challenge: People value prevention but think it is someone else’s responsibility.
Our approach: We articulate the roles and responsibilities that everyone has in prevention. This includes the many roles for government. Government is critical to improving health. Many government sectors take actions, invest resources, and make decisions every day that impact health. We work to ensure that these are all in service to equitably improving health, safety, and wellbeing.

3. We advocate for prevention and health equity policy and systems change, improving conditions for children, families, and communities.

The challenge: People understand that prevention is important but—particularly in times of crisis and scarce resources—may not think it’s as relevant.
Our approach: We underscore the critical need for prevention even in tough times by showing how a strong foundation of prevention can relieve pressure on the need for healthcare services and after-the-fact interventions. We validate what community members and residents know: comprehensive, community-level prevention is the basic infrastructure that enhances the resources, opportunities, and conditions people need to fully participate in civic life and lead fulfilling lives.

The challenge: Programs and services are often set up to deal with one issue at a time, when families and communities are facing many complex, often interrelated issues.
Our approach: We work with partners across multiple sectors and topics to connect the dots between issues and demonstrate how good prevention solutions solve multiple, interrelated challenges, including in our policy and systems change work.

4. We champion prevention and health equity, amplifying opportunities and generating momentum.

The challenge: People love the concept of prevention but are skeptical that it is possible or effective.
Our approach: We counter skepticism by demonstrating that prevention works, highlighting successful community efforts and building up the skills and capacities of prevention and equity champions to become leaders.

The challenge: Some people think that prevention isn’t relevant for or ignores people who are ill, disabled, or injured.
Our approach: We understand that some illnesses and disabilities are not preventable, and we underscore the value of community prevention strategies in supporting disease management, treatment, rehabilitation and recovery; supporting mobility and access to opportunity for people living with disabilities; and mitigating or delaying the onset of some mental health problems or supporting a higher quality of life for people with mental illnesses. We seek to embed prevention and equity meaningfully into the full continuum of approaches to health, safety, and wellbeing.
Our Strategies

To achieve health, safety, and wellbeing for all, we advance four interrelated strategies that drive our outcomes:

- **Shape new prevention and health equity solutions and catalyze INNOVATION**
- **Build the PRACTICE of effective prevention**
- **Advance POLICY AND SYSTEMS change in support of health, safety, and wellbeing**
- **Generate MOMENTUM for comprehensive prevention and health equity**

Sometimes we focus within a single strategy; more often, we work across multiple strategies. A common trajectory of our work is that we INNOVATE solutions, informed by community experience, then we build tools and frameworks and provide training and technical assistance to advance PRACTICE, identifying POLICY and SYSTEMS change to scale and sustain, all the while focused on building MOMENTUM for prevention and health equity solutions.

It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural, and physical environment conspire against such change.

- Brian D. Smedley and S. Leonard Syme, National Academy of Medicine
Our Outcomes

To achieve our goals, we know that prevention must become the norm. We will know the norm has shifted from an overwhelming emphasis on individual treatment and response to also include a focus on prevention and equity when...

1) Core influencers within the health system—e.g. health care, public health, behavioral health, and health plans/insurers—emphasize the need for prevention, act preventively, and take population-level action on community conditions in support of health, safety, and wellbeing.

2) The multiple sectors that impact health and safety outcomes—e.g. housing, transportation, justice and economic development—take actions and make decisions in the course of their daily business that not only achieve their own mandates but also improve health, safety, and wellbeing outcomes.

3) Community conditions support health, safety, and wellbeing for everyone.

4) The burden of illness, injury and the absence of wellbeing does not fall disproportionately on communities of color, communities of concentrated disadvantage, and other communities that have been segregated from full opportunities for health, safety, and wellbeing.

5) Health spans increase and health gaps such as across racial, socioeconomic, and gender lines are closed.

The function of protecting and developing health must rank even above that of restoring it when it is impaired.

- Hippocrates, known as the father of Western medicine
Our Measures

As we put our Strategic Framework into action, we will be looking at how we can track progress toward our goals and outcomes, such as through these kinds of measures:

Sustainable, scalable resources for prevention and health equity:
- Robust, sustained funding for public health
- Public and private investments address all community determinants of health
- Financial incentives and models for healthcare supported by regulation and policies

Skills and capacities to advance prevention and health equity:
- Practitioners and policymakers understand effective prevention and its impact
- Practitioners and community members put effective prevention and health equity strategies in place
- Professional/academic training emphasizes prevention

Tools and frameworks that support practice, decision-making, and accountability:
- Implementation guidance and models
- Community prevention measures and metrics
- Evaluation that fully captures return on investment
- Scalable, replicable prevention approaches in place in diverse communities, highlighted as models for other locales

Leadership to advance and sustain prevention and health equity:
- Public health and clinician demand for healthy outcomes
- An emergent generation of prevention leadership, including youth, reflective of the diversity of the country
- Political and social will for prevention

Equitable opportunities for health for all:
- Authentic community leadership, voice, and engagement in change
- Bias and discrimination rooted out of policy and systems, previous impacts ameliorated and equity-promoting systems and policies in place

A narrative that elevates a shared vision of health, safety, and wellbeing for all:
- Broad and shared understanding of the efficacy of prevention and the need for health equity
- Understanding of how to implement effective prevention and health equity practice and policy
- Understanding of the range of benefits to scaled prevention and health equity efforts and investments

Health is the only thing that really matters.

- Steve Kerr,
Golden State Warriors coach
Our Theory of Change

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<thead>
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<tbody>
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Our Goals

- **Health, Safety, and Wellbeing**
- **Equity**
- **Community Focus**
- **Upstream Prevention**

**Our Measures**
- Skills and capacities to advance prevention and health equity.
- Leadership to advance and sustain prevention and health equity.
- Sustainable, scalable resources for prevention and health equity.
- Tools and frameworks that support practice, decision-making and accountability.
- Equitable opportunities for health for all.
- A narrative that elevates a shared vision of health, safety, and wellbeing for all.

**Our Outcomes**
- Core influencers within the health system emphasize the need for prevention and act preventively.
- Multiple sectors take actions to prevent illness and injury and improve health, safety, and wellbeing outcomes.
- Community conditions support health, safety, and wellbeing for everyone.
- The burden of illness, injury and the absence of wellbeing does not fall disproportionately on communities that have been segregated from full opportunities for health, safety, and wellbeing.
- Health spans increased; health gaps closed.
Our Fundamentals

Our work is characterized by looking at the context in which we are operating and tailoring our efforts accordingly. Other fundamentals of our work include: emphasizing community as the unit of transformation, being practice-informed, working collaboratively, advancing comprehensive upstream prevention, promoting multisector collaboration, and building on our staff’s topical expertise.

Community as the unit of transformation

Community can be based on shared geography and/or identity. We emphasize changing community conditions as a direct way to impact health, safety, and wellbeing. We recognize that community conditions are shaped by factors that include racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and the inequitable distribution of resources, power, and opportunity. Changing community conditions can push back against these various forms of oppression and change how they play out at the community level.

Our Tool for Health and Resilience in Vulnerable Environments (THRIVE) reflects three clusters and 12 community factors closely associated with health, safety, and wellbeing. It supports health equity across communities. Our work builds on community resilience and is focused on community transformation so that people can thrive.

Working on community determinants is both scary and reassuring. If we don’t do this level of prevention, we will always be chasing the problem.

– Ohio Community Collective Impact Model for Change Initiative Community Partner
**Practice-Informed**

We work in and across jurisdictions—local, state, national, and federal—and multiple sectors, as well as with communities to ensure that our efforts are practice-informed and practical. This also supports scalability and sustainability.

**Collaborative**

We work collaboratively with many others to achieve our goals and outcomes.

*Man does not weave this web of life. He is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.*

- Chief Seattle, Suquamish & Duwamish chief
Comprehensive
We advance quality upstream prevention through comprehensive solutions across the Spectrum of Prevention.

Multisector
We advance the science and practice of multisector engagement in solutions, building on the Collaboration Multiplier.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

- African Proverb
Topical Expertise

Prevention Institute has taken the lessons learned from past successes in public health and other fields and created a methodology that can be applied to almost any issue that influences health, safety, and wellbeing. We have applied this methodology to the following issues, among others:

- Addressing the impact of **structural drivers of health inequity**—like racism, income inequality, and power differentials—to change the community conditions tied to those inequities.

- Changing policies and practices to **increase the availability of healthy, affordable foods**, especially in communities where fresh food is scarce, and the food and beverage industry pushes its unhealthiest products.

- Fostering community conditions that **promote active lifestyles** and contribute to **increases in safe physical activity**, particularly in communities of color and for communities with low household incomes.

- Adopting a public health approach to **change the underlying conditions that contribute to multiple forms of violence**—in homes, schools, and neighborhoods—to prevent violence from occurring.

- Advancing bold new practices to **transform the healthcare system** in ways that enable healthcare organizations to address the underlying community conditions that impact health and equity.

- Promoting **mental health and preventing substance misuse** through community prevention solutions—like fostering social connections, improving the built environment, and increasing access to economic opportunity—and fostering resilience.

- **Addressing and preventing community trauma** through our Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience framework. We have used this framework to address issues ranging from gun violence to the opioid epidemic to catastrophic climate events.

- Advocating for **health equity in the built and natural environments**—including transportation; a healthy, equitable land-use system; equitable parks and open space policies and practices; and safe, clean and reliable water—that increase opportunities for health, safety, and wellbeing in communities of color and communities with low household incomes and addressing challenges such as displacement and gentrification.

*When you start with needs, you get programs. When you start with strengths, you get possibilities.*

- Lupe Serrano, Casa de Eperanza
Overview of our Work

Reflecting our goals (see page 6), we emphasize equity, community, and upstream prevention in everything we do. Much of our work falls under the categories of health, safety or wellbeing. Collectively advancing these goals reflects an investment in our future.
Prevention Institute’s Los Angeles office in Leimert Park.