

Core Messages Around Community Prevention/Public Health

Every American deserves to live a long, healthy life. But we're falling short of that goal.

- Tens of millions of Americans are suffering from preventable chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.
- Today's children are in danger of becoming the first generation in American history to live shorter, less healthy lives than their parents.
- Health care costs are rising and out of control.

Preventing disease and injury is the most effective, common-sense way to improve health.

- We have a sick care system, not a health care system. We focus on *treating* disease and injury after they occur instead of *preventing* disease and injury before they occur.
- We must make prevention a top priority, and turn our sick care system into a disease prevention system.

Each of us must take responsibility.

- Each of us is personally responsible for making healthy choices for ourselves and preventing illness in our own lives.
- Parents are responsible for their children's health.

There are also things we can do together – as communities – to support individuals and families who want to take personal responsibility. Community prevention should begin with a strong focus on kids and schools.

- Schools can help parents by providing kids with nutritious meals; getting rid of the junk food in the school vending machines; offering gym classes three or more times a week; and teaching kids about the importance of diet and physical activity.
- We should also make sure that kids have safe parks and playgrounds so they can play and exercise without fearing injury or crime.
- Kids should be discouraged from smoking.

Communities can help kids and everyone else, too, by making healthy choices easy choices.

- Communities can provide safe places to walk, jog, bike, swim, take an exercise class, or play sports.
- Communities should look for ways to prevent injury.
- Restaurants should include nutrition information about menu items, and everyone should have access to supermarkets or farmers' markets that sell fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Businesses should consider offering workplace wellness programs, and public places should be smoke-free.
- Communities should have well trained first responders and public health workers ready to deal with emergencies, like floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes.

There are also many economic reasons for building health into our communities.

- Healthy, safe communities can attract employers and create jobs.
- A healthier work force is a more productive work force.
- A stronger community means stronger housing values.

We're all in this together – and we can all benefit.

- Community prevention makes it easier for each of us to take personal responsibility for our lives, saves health care dollars, and improves the economy and quality of life. We can all be for that.

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