



PROMOTING COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY: THE IMPERATIVE OF PREVENTIVE CARE

Public safety officials play a critical role in ensuring community health and wellbeing and often make the difference between life and death. These physically and mentally demanding jobs require public safety officials to be fit and strong to readily and ably serve their communities. By working to establish healthy living habits to reduce preventable chronic illnesses and physical injuries, public safety organizations play an important leadership role both for their members and the communities they serve to ensure all are well prepared for emergencies.

Tens of millions of Americans are suffering from preventable diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes and today's children are in danger of becoming the first generation in American history to live shorter, less healthy lives than their parents. A greater emphasis on preventive care ensures that future generations of Americans can be resilient and have a better quality of life. As integral community partners, public safety organizations play an important leadership role in promoting wellness, injury and illness prevention, and fitness in their local communities. Instead of waiting to treat illnesses and face consequences of poor health, we must focus on prevention from the very beginning. Community health and wellness depends on cooperation and commitments from the entire community to ensure all have access to healthy and safe environments where we live, learn, work and play.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund:

The Prevention and Public Health Fund, established by the Affordable Care Act, gives us a chance to help turn our sick care system into a health care system. In fiscal year 2012, the Prevention Fund made \$1 billion available to communities in every state, and over the next 10 years (FY2013-FY2022) an additional \$12.5 billion will be added for proven, effective ways to keep Americans healthier and more productive. This is real money going to:

- Workplace Wellness Programs to increase the productivity of workers in all sectors.
- Health education and promotion that help ensure that all members of our society can live, learn, work, and engage actively in our communities.
- Community-based programs to prevent chronic diseases and injuries.
- Expanded opportunities for recreation and exercise.
- Expanded mental health, injury and violence prevention programs.

The Fund also helps state and local health departments:

- Provide flu shots and other immunizations
- Protect our food, air, and water
- Fight infectious diseases
- Respond to natural disasters like floods and hurricanes
- Prepare for terrorist attacks

Moving Forward:

Public safety officers have crucial roles as first responders, but they also play an important role in educating their community on fire prevention, drunk driving, safety, and disaster preparedness. Expanding the discussion to include topics such as injury and disease prevention, fitness, and healthy diets is essential.

First responders such as paramedics are well placed within their communities to lead prevention initiatives. In some communities, paramedics have begun to offer free blood pressure and diabetes screenings, early interventions that can help individuals control high blood pressure and diabetes before these conditions become fatal. Such prevention and patient education efforts can decrease the number of preventable chronic diseases and emergency room visits and improve a community's health and wellness.

The National Association of State Emergency Medical Service Officials has already taken an active part in protecting the Prevention and Public Health Fund and its role in helping to improve health and quality of life in America. They have joined nearly 800 groups in signing on to support the Fund.

Public safety officials can continue to make a difference in the lives of Americans through advocating for prevention, supporting the Prevention and Public Health Fund, and helping Americans make healthier choices and take personal responsibility for their own health and the health of their families and children.

Call to Action:

Please join the Trust for America's Health nearly 800 state and national organizations in support of the Prevention and Public Health Fund. You can add your organization to the list by contacting Robyn Gougelet at rgougelet@TFAH.org