

TFAH's Comments on Healthy People 2020

Overarching Goals

- Each iteration of Healthy People has included a set of overarching goals. Should the overarching goals be realistic and achievable or should they be aspirational in nature? For example, Healthy People 2010's two overarching goals are aspirational:
 - Increase quality and years of healthy life.
 - Eliminate health disparities.

TFAH's Comments: The goals should provide a common charge to audiences at the federal, state and local level, as well as the private sector. They should be realistic and achievable when possible but aspirational when data is lacking. We must assign responsibility for achieving these goals.

Conceptual Approach/Organizing Framework

The organizing framework for the Healthy People objectives has evolved over time. The 1990 objectives were organized within 15 risk or determinant-oriented Strategic Areas; Healthy People 2000 featured 22 Priority Areas that represented a mix of risk, determinant, intervention, and disease-oriented categories. [Healthy People 2010](#) includes 28 Focus Areas organized around a mix of risk, determinant, intervention, and disease-specific categories.

Objectives (Please note that we are not seeking comments on specific objectives at this time, but will in 2009.)

- Selection Criteria. How should Healthy People 2020 objectives be determined or selected? Must all objectives have established data sources or should developmental objectives (i.e., objectives lacking data) be included? Should objectives be prioritized, and, if so, what should the criteria be?

TFAH's Comments: When possible, it is important to include objectives with established data sources. However, when no data is available, Healthy People 2020 should set aspirational goals and objectives. In those instances, part of the goal should be to begin to collect data.

- Number. With hundreds of objectives, Healthy People 2010 has been called "encyclopedic". Should Healthy People 2020 be similarly encyclopedic, or should the number of objectives be more limited, manageable, and focused?

TFAH's Comments: By limiting the number of objectives, we will be able to focus on achieving progress in a few areas.

Other

- *Other comments* on conceptual approach and organizing framework, focus areas, and objectives not related to existing comments.

TFAH's Comments: To the degree possible, Healthy People 2020 should include intermediate objectives so that we can monitor progress and identify deficiencies throughout the process. We should also distinguish between clinical and community level interventions and define objectives for which more research is needed about effective interventions.

Users and Implementation

The [Healthy People](#) initiative establishes national health objectives and motivates coordinated public health action on the national, state and local levels. It serves a diverse group of users, including health care and public health professionals and agencies, policy makers, states, educational institutions, and businesses.

Intended Audiences

- Healthy People is important to many stakeholders. For which audiences should the initiative be intended? Should Healthy People be geared toward the public health community, the business community, other communities or partners, the general public, or others? How should the intended audiences affect the vision, mission and overarching goals of Healthy People?

TFAH's Comments: Healthy People 2020 should be broad in its scope. Decision-makers in all agencies and sectors should consider the impact of their programs and actions on public health. Improving health outcomes will require a coordinated partnership from all levels of government and all sectors of society, and if we want transportation, agriculture, environmental and education policies to be formulated with public health in mind, then Healthy People's intended audience must not be limited to the public health community alone.

Stakeholder engagement

- Several mechanisms are being used to keep the public informed about the development of Healthy People 2020: the Healthy People website, listserve, and regional meetings. What additional communication vehicles should be used?

TFAH's Comments: The first goal should be to ensure that the media and general public are aware of the Healthy People initiative. HHS should launch a public education campaign that focuses on raising awareness of the process. It is also critical that the public be actively engaged in the development of these goals and objectives. Regional meetings to inform and website interaction are weak substitutes for an active engagement process. We already have evidence from DHHS's pandemic influenza planning efforts

that citizens can be actively and effectively engaged in making very difficult and complex public health policy decisions. A similar process should be undertaken as we define the goals for the nation for the next decade. HHS should offer progress updates, with a strong communications and outreach effort to engage the public about the overarching goals and key objectives.