

## North Carolina Division of Public Health Takes Steps to Meet Healthy People 2020 Targets

*The North Carolina Division of Public Health (NCDPH) is working to meet Healthy People 2020 targets in the state by disseminating information on evidence-based strategies, requiring local health agencies to address Healthy People 2020 objectives, and convening health professionals to develop the North Carolina Healthy People 2020 plan.*

The Healthy People initiative has provided 10-year national objectives to improve America's health since 1990.<sup>1</sup> The current initiative, Healthy People 2020, contains 1,200 objectives, which are divided into 42 public health topic areas. The objectives are designed to address the United States' most pressing health concerns by increasing awareness and understanding of the determinants of health, disease, and disability, and opportunities for progress. Healthy People promotes community-sector collaboration, empowers individuals to make informed health decisions, and helps evaluate prevention activities.

States can incorporate Healthy People 2020 resources to address health challenges in a number of ways: for example, many states are using Healthy People as a guide to develop their own 10-year state plans by using the Healthy People national SMART objectives as a reference or benchmark for their own. The Healthy People 2020 [website](#) offers many resources to assist with state plan development, including:

- An [evidence-based resource database](#) for specific demographic groups.
- The [MAP-IT Guide](#) for assembling partners, identifying community needs, executing a plan, and evaluating progress.
- The [Healthy People in Action](#) database of state healthy people plans and success stories.

- According to America's Health Rankings, North Carolina ranks 35 in overall health status among U.S. states.<sup>1</sup>
- The 2013 Healthy North Carolina progress report indicates that out of 40 objectives, progress is being made in reaching the target of 16 objectives.<sup>2</sup>

NCDPH exhibits excellence in striving to meet Healthy People 2020 targets by using evidence-based resources, requiring local health departments to address Healthy People objectives, and involving a broad range of stakeholders in the development of the Healthy North Carolina 2020 plan.

### Steps Taken:

In 1990, the NCDPH began developing 10-year state Healthy People plans. The following steps were taken to create North Carolina's most recent plan, [Healthy North Carolina 2020: A Better State of Health](#).

- In 2008, North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) convened a task force of legislators, state and local agency officials, primary care providers, healthcare professionals, and consumers to

develop the [Prevention Action Plan](#) (i.e., plan derived from looking at disability and causes of death in North Carolina), which was released in 2009.

- In 2009, the Governor's Task Force asked NCIOM to assist with developing objectives for the Healthy North Carolina 2020 plan. NCIOM worked in collaboration with many partners to assist with state objectives, including the Governor's Task Force for Healthy Carolinians, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, and the Office of Healthy Carolinians and Health Education.
- NCIOM convened 11 subcommittees to develop objectives and targets within each specific focus area (tobacco use, physical activity and nutrition, injury and violence, maternal and infant health, sexually transmitted disease and unintended pregnancy, substance abuse, mental health, oral health, environmental risks, infectious disease and foodborne illness, and social determinants of health). A steering committee, consisting of the state health director, chair of the Governor's Task Force for Healthy Carolinians, and other public health experts, helped to identify members for each subcommittee. Over 150 people were involved in the development of the Healthy North Carolina 2020 objectives. Nine of the focus areas in the Prevention Action Plan were included in the Healthy North Carolina 2020 plan.
- The steering committee added four additional focus areas to the nine focus areas that were already established from the Prevention Action Plan to create Healthy North Carolina 2020. To set targets for each objective, the steering committee used a variety of methodologies. The four core methods used included best-performing state, best-performing state's pace, maintaining North Carolina's pace of change, and making a 10 percent improvement in current value. Additional methodologies were applied when there were limitations in the data or trends, or targets were unreplicable or unrealistic.<sup>3</sup>
- To promote NCIOM's Prevention Action Plan and the Healthy North Carolina 2020 objectives, the Center for Healthy North Carolina (CHNC) was established in July 2011 as a program of the North Carolina Public Health Foundation. CHNC, which was established with funding from The Duke Endowment, works in partnership with NCDPH to build capacity in communities to implement evidence-based strategies that target community-identified health priorities related to the Healthy North Carolina 2020 objectives.

NCDPH is promoting Healthy People 2020 across the state through Healthy North Carolina 2020 plan implementation and various other mechanisms. Additionally, a database is being created that will illustrate specific communities that are implementing particular objectives and evidence-based strategies. Information, including the length of time to implement strategies, cost, and staffing requirements, is provided to assist other communities in the uptake of evidence-based strategies to meet objectives. NCDPH is staying in close contact with the local health departments (LHDs) in North Carolina to provide technical assistance. Recent policy changes are requiring LHDs to play an active role in developing and implementing the healthy North Carolina 2020 plan. For instance, LHDs must identify two healthy North Carolina 2020 objectives through the needs assessments conducted every three to four years, and address those objectives in their action plan. LHDs are also implementing at least one evidence based strategy. Beginning July 2014 LHDs are required to describe the implementation and evaluation plan for the objectives and strategies.

## Results:

- The Healthy North Carolina 2020 plan consists of 13 focus areas with 40 objectives.
- Every year NCDPH releases a report indicating progress toward achieving the Healthy North Carolina 2020 objectives. The [2014 Annual Data Report](#) lists each objective, the target, the baseline and current data.
- NCDPH decided to focus on three areas that were the most commonly identified in community health assessments, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. Technical assistance is being provided to LHDs implementing evidence-based strategies to address these areas.
- Social determinants of health were included in Healthy North Carolina 2020, and recently, several LHDs have identified social determinants as priorities in their community health assessments. The three objectives are to:
  - Decrease the percentage of individuals living in poverty.
  - Increase the four-year high school graduation rate.
  - Decrease the percentage of people spending more than 30 percent of their income on rental housing.
- In addition, LHDs are taking steps to address the underlying causes of morbidity and mortality among infants, children, and adults.

## Lessons Learned:

- The Healthy North Carolina 2010 plan contained 108 objectives, which made implementation difficult. The Healthy North Carolina 2020 plan has only 40 objectives, which simplified implementation.
- NCDPH encountered three challenges while tracking the objectives over time, including changes in the original data sources, data collection methodology, and how data is reported by agencies. In response, the implementation team decided to develop a standardized plan for addressing objectives in cases where challenges arise. In any case where an objective may need to be modified because of data methodology changes or other challenges, the North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics will work with the implementation team to make recommendations to NCDPH.

## For more information:

Laura Emerson Edwards, RN, MPA  
Director  
Center for Healthy North Carolina  
Email: [laura.edwards@centerforhealthync.org](mailto:laura.edwards@centerforhealthync.org)

Eleanor Howell  
Manager, Data Dissemination Unit  
North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics  
Email: [eleanor.howell@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:eleanor.howell@dhhs.nc.gov)

# State Story



Kristen Wan  
Senior Analyst, Health Promotion and Transformation  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)  
Email: [kwan@astho.org](mailto:kwan@astho.org)

## References:

1. United Health Foundation. *America's Health Rankings*. Available at <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/NC>. Accessed 6-17-2014.
2. North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy North Carolina Annual Data Report*. Available at <http://publichealth.nc.gov/hnc2020/docs/HealthyNC2020-UpdateMarch-2014-0324.pdf>. Accessed 6-17-2014.
3. North Carolina Institute of Medicine. *Healthy North Carolina 2020 Technical Report*. Available at <http://www.nciom.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/HNC2020-TechReport-final.pdf>. Accessed 10-21-2014.