

Senate HELP Committee Proposal

Title III: IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Synopsis: This title seeks to make preventive health and wellness services available and accessible to all Americans, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or physical or cognitive ability. The activities proposed by the title are designed to reduce or eliminate barriers for all Americans in achieving and maintaining optimal health.

Subtitle A: Modernizing Our Disease Prevention and Public Health Systems

Synopsis: This subtitle provides for an enhanced national strategy to prevent disease, promote health, and build our public health system. Health promotion activities will be supported and coordinated on the federal level. In addition, the most effective disease prevention strategies will be identified and promoted in a nationwide campaign.

National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council:

Creates an interagency council dedicated to promoting healthy policies at the federal level. The Council shall consist of representatives of federal agencies that interact with federal health and safety policy, including the departments of HHS, Agriculture, Education, Labor, Transportation, and others. The Council will establish a national prevention and health promotion strategy and develop interagency working relationships to implement the strategy. The Council will report annually to Congress on the health promotion activities of the Council and progress in meeting goals of the national strategy.

Prevention and Public Health Investment Fund:

Establishes a Prevention and Public Health Investment Fund. The goal of the Investment Fund is to provide an expanded and sustained national investment in prevention and public health programs to improve health and help restrain the rate of growth in private and public sector health care costs. This will involve a dedicated, stable funding stream for prevention, wellness and public health activities authorized by the Public Health Service Act.

Clinical and Community Preventive Services:

Expands the efforts of, and improves the coordination between, two task forces which provide recommendations for preventive interventions. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force is an independent panel of experts in primary care and prevention that systematically reviews the evidence of effectiveness of clinical preventive services such as colorectal cancer screening or aspirin to prevent heart disease, and develops recommendations for their use. The Community Preventive Services Task Force uses a public health perspective to review the evidence of effectiveness of population-based preventive services such as tobacco cessation, increasing physical activity and preventing skin cancer, and develops recommendations for their use.

Education and Outreach Campaign Regarding Preventive Benefits:

Directs the Secretary to convene a national public/private partnership for the purposes of conducting a national prevention and health promotion outreach and education campaign. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness of activities to promote health and prevent disease across the lifespan.

Subtitle B: Increasing Access to Clinical Preventive Services

Synopsis: This subtitle enhances access to comprehensive primary medical, dental, and behavioral health care services that are key to prevention and wellness, especially for vulnerable populations and underserved communities.

Right Choices Program:

Establishes a temporary program giving uninsured adults access to preventive services. The Right Choices Program would provide chronic disease health risk assessment, a care plan, and referrals to community-based resources for low-income, uninsured adults until universal insurance coverage is made available through the Gateway. The program could significantly improve the health of working age adults as they enter the healthcare system, offering significant long-term cost savings.

School-based Health Clinics:

Authorizes a grant program for the operation and development of School-based Health Clinics, which provide comprehensive and accessible preventive and primary health care services to medically underserved children and families. The goal of establishing such clinics is to improve the physical health, emotional well-being and academic performance of the populations they serve. The clinics will work in collaboration with schools to integrate health into the overall school environment.

Oral Healthcare Prevention Activities:

Establishes an oral healthcare prevention education campaign at CDC focusing on preventive measures and targeted towards key populations including children and pregnant women. Creates demonstration programs on oral health delivery and strengthens surveillance capacity.

Subtitle C: Creating Healthier Communities

Synopsis: This subtitle enables health improvement to occur in communities as well as in medical settings. Most chronic diseases can be prevented through lifestyle and environmental changes. Community prevention programs encourage physical activity, good nutrition, and the reduction of tobacco use, making it easier for individuals to make healthy choices.

Community Transformation Grants:

This section authorizes the Secretary to award competitive grants to eligible entities for programs that promote individual and community health and prevent the incidence of chronic disease. Communities can carry out programs to prevent and reduce the incidence of chronic diseases associated with overweight and obesity, tobacco use, or mental illness; or other activities that are consistent with the goals of promoting healthy communities.

Healthy Aging, Living Well:

The goal of this program is to improve the health status of the pre-Medicare-eligible population to help control chronic disease and reduce Medicare costs. The CDC would provide grants to states or large local health departments to conduct pilot programs in the 55-to-64 year old population. Pilot programs would evaluate chronic disease risk factors, conduct evidence-based public health interventions, and ensure that individuals identified with chronic disease or at-risk for chronic disease receive clinical treatment to reduce risk. Pilot programs would be evaluated for success in controlling Medicare costs in the community.

Wellness for Individuals with Disabilities:

Amends the Americans with Disabilities Act to establish standards for accessibility of medical diagnostic equipment to individuals with disabilities.

Immunizations:

Authorizes states to purchase adult vaccines under CDC contracts. Currently, 23 states purchase vaccines under CDC contracts. These contracts for adult vaccines provide savings that range from 23-69 percent compared to the private sector cost. Authorizes a demonstration program to improve immunization coverage. Under this program, CDC will provide grants to states to improve immunization coverage of children, adolescents, and adults through the use of evidence-based interventions. States may use funds to implement interventions that are recommended by the Community Preventive Services Task Force, such as reminders or recalls for patients or providers, or home visits. Reauthorizes the Immunization Program in Section 317 of the Public Health Service Act.

Menu Labeling:

This initiative represents a compromise between the Menu Education and Labeling (MEAL) Act, sponsored by Senator Harkin, and the Labeling Education and Nutrition (LEAN) Act, sponsored by Senators Carper and Murkowski. Under the terms of the compromise, a restaurant that is part of a chain with 20 or more locations doing business under the same name (other restaurants are exempt) would be required to disclose calories on the menu board and in a written form, available to customers upon request, additional nutrition information pertaining to total calories and calories from fat, as well as amounts of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, complex carbohydrates, sugars, dietary fiber, and protein.

Encouraging a Healthy Start:

This initiative would amend the Fair Labor Standard Act to require employers to provide break time and a place for breastfeeding mothers to express milk. This would not apply to an employer with fewer than 50 employees, and there are no monetary damages.

Encouraging Employer-Sponsored Wellness Programs:

This provision provides more flexibility under HIPAA and expands the amount that is allowed for employers to reward employees for participating in wellness programs from 20 percent (current law) to 30 percent premium discount. It also allows the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor and Department of Treasury to

increase this reward to 50 percent if deemed appropriate. Lastly it also includes important provisions to ensure discriminatory practices do not occur.

Subtitle D: Support for Prevention and Public Health Innovation

Synopsis: This subtitle provides support for prevention and public health research. We must develop tools and interventions to address new public health challenges and build the evidence base for public health interventions that improve the health and safety of the nation.

Research on Optimizing the Delivery of Public Health Services:

The Secretary, acting through the Director of CDC, shall provide funding for research in the area of public health services and systems. This research shall include examining best practices relating to prevention, analyzing the translation of interventions from academic institutions to clinics and communities, and identifying effective strategies for delivering public health services in real world settings. CDC shall annually report research findings to Congress.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Quality:

Ensures that any ongoing or new federal health program achieve the collection and reporting of data by race, ethnicity, geographic location, socioeconomic status, health literacy, primary language and any other indicator of disparity. The Secretary shall analyze data collected to detect and monitor trends in health disparities and disseminate this information to the relevant federal agencies. The Secretary shall also award grants to develop appropriate methods to detect and assess health disparities.

Health Impact Assessments:

Establishes a program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support the development of health impact assessments and dissemination of best practices related to health impact assessments. The Centers for Disease Control shall award grants to State or local governments working in coalitions with community-based organizations, public health agencies, health care providers or academic institutions to implement, further support or conduct research on health impact assessments.

CDC and Employer-based Wellness Programs:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will study and evaluate best employer-based wellness practices and provide an educational campaign and technical assistance to promote the benefits of worksite health promotion to employers.

Environmental Health Tracking:

Establishes a Coordinated Environmental Public Health Network. This network will build upon and coordinate among existing environmental and health data collection systems and create state environmental public health networks. State networks will track the incidence, prevalence, and trends of priority chronic conditions and potentially related environmental exposures, paying particular attention to low income and minority communities.