Module 1:  Using Healthy People 2020 to Improve Population Health

Part 2: What is Healthy People?

Carter: Hi, I'm Carter Blakey, the Deputy Director of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

I'm going to be leading you through an overview of Healthy People 2020. In this module, I'll introduce you to some of the key features of Healthy People 2020, which is a decades-long prevention initiative; I'll inform you of how Healthy People is being used as a roadmap and a framework across the country; and I'll also give you some insights to our new and dynamic user-centered website, HealthyPeople.gov.

First, let's begin with an overview of Healthy People 2020. So what is Healthy People? Often called a roadmap for nationwide health promotion and disease prevention efforts, Healthy People is about understanding where we are now, and taking informed action to get to where we want to be over a 10-year period.

It provides science-based national objectives for improving the health of the nation, engages a network of multidisciplinary, multisectoral stakeholders at all levels, creates a comprehensive strategic framework for health promotion and disease prevention issues, and includes specific, measurable objectives with targets to be achieved by the year 2020.

Healthy People calls for tracking of data-driven measures and outcomes that monitor our nation's progress over time allowing us to see trends and to motivate, guide, and focus action.

Since its inception in 1979, it has served as a comprehensive blueprint for our national public health disease prevention and health promotion efforts.

Healthy People is driven by our stakeholders. Both federal and public input shape the topics and objectives that make up Healthy People. This really makes Healthy People the nation's prevention initiative. We've seen Healthy People put into action by states, communities and organizations, and even by countries outside of the United States.

By providing data and resources on various important indicators of health, Healthy People can assist decision makers when it comes to program planning and allocating of valuable resources. Healthy People is also used for establishing benchmarks and goals at the state and local levels.

Healthy People promotes partnerships of all dimensions, and we encourage our stakeholders to think outside the box when it comes to collaboration. Our health and all policies approach promotes viewing all aspects of life in community, whether it's education, transportation, or the built environment, through a health lens, and it also recognizes the necessity of having all sectors engaged in order to make significant improvements in population health.
Healthy People has 4 overarching goals, 42 topic areas, and over 1,200 objectives.

The overarching goals are: first, attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury and premature death; second, achieve health equity, eliminate disparities and improve the health of all groups; third, create a social and physical environment that promotes good health for all; and fourth, promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

Healthy People encompasses 42 prevention and health promotion topic areas. 13 topic areas are new to Healthy People 2020. Over 1,200 objectives are organized under these topic areas. Most of the objectives have targets that we aim to achieve by the year 2020.

Healthy People is grounded in science and data. Through achieving Health People’s goals and targets, we strive to create a society in which all people live long, healthy lives.

Now, you may be a little overwhelmed by the volume of objectives and topics Healthy People has to offer; however, a great place to start is with the Leading Health Indicators.

The Leading Health Indicators are a smaller set of key indicators that are recognized as major influences on the public's health. Each indicator is linked to a specific Healthy People objective. The Leading Health Indicators single out individual behaviors, social and environmental factors, and important health systems issues that most broadly affect the health of individuals, communities, and the nation. By getting acquainted with the Leading Health Indicators, you’ll get to know the high priority health issues of the nation.

Not only does Healthy People serve as a model for public health initiatives and planning, but it is also used to underpin goals and efforts across the federal government. Healthy People provides the foundation for prevention activities across the United States and within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other federal agencies.

Over time, Healthy People has evolved as the nation's public health priorities have changed. Now that we know what impact issues like the built environment and access to health services can have on health, we realize the importance of expanding our concept of health. So Healthy People aims to remain relevant as science grows and the evidence evolves.

Our user centered website, HealthyPeople.gov, is a great resource for students, policy makers, clinicians, and professionals both inside and outside public health. Healthy People provides access to reliable data that can be used by individuals with all levels of data experience. This feature, called Healthy People Data 2020, not only provides data and statistical information, but also data analysis, data charts, and infographics.

We know that providing data is only half the battle, so we work to provide our stakeholders and users with resources and tools for action. The HealthyPeople.gov website offers evidence-based resources to assist communities, states and individuals in improving the health of the
population. We also provide stories from the field on our website so the public can learn from one another about programs and interventions and action across the nation.

So hopefully, you know a bit more about Healthy People 2020. To learn even more, I encourage you to go to HealthyPeople.gov to delve deeper into our data, our interventions, and other resources. We encourage students, professors and others in academia to become experts in Healthy People 2020. And moreover, I encourage and truly hope that once you've finished your studies, you will use Healthy People as a health professional.