Module 1: Using Healthy People 2020 to Improve Population Health

Part 3: Healthy People and the National Center for Health Statistics

Rebecca: Hi, my name is Rebecca Hines. I'm Chief of the Health Promotion Statistics Branch with the National Center for Health Statistics, which is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one of several agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services. Thanks for your interest in the Healthy People initiative.

For this module, we're going to focus on Healthy People data specifically, and the role that CDC's National Center for Health Statistics plays in tracking progress across the Healthy People objectives.

The National Center for Health Statistics is one of several federal statistical agencies within the federal government whose principle function is the compilation and analysis of data and the dissemination of information for statistical purposes.

Federal statistical agencies are governed by specific distinguishing operating principles that ensure the integrity of the data produced. Of note, they have independence from political and other undue external influence, and what is produced is designed to be relevant to policy issues. Of course, the purpose is to have credibility among data users as well as trust among the providers of data, and CHS wears two separate hats; one as a CDC center, and the other is as this distinct role as a federal statistical agency.

NCHS is well known for its surveys and focus on collection of data that are nationally representative. Here, you can see a list of the main systems and surveys, each one worthy of focus as each has been designed for a specific purpose, and all can be further explored at the NCHS website. Designing and administering surveys that are nationally representative is a primary focus of the center.

The role of this branch in the Healthy People initiative is to serve as the statistical adviser to the department and the topic area workgroups on health promotion data, and specifically Healthy People.

We maintain a comprehensive database for all the Healthy People objectives; we research and develop methods for measuring the overarching goals of Healthy People, and you'll see – I'll focus a little bit more on health disparities, which is one of the four main overarching goals; and we work to create graphical presentations to display progress towards reaching the goals and objectives.

As you heard in the previous module, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health's ODPHP oversees and provides primary leadership for the initiative. The 42 workgroups – one for each...
of the 42 topic areas – provide leadership and subject matter expertise for defining objectives and identifying data sources used to track them. As you can see from the illustration here, ODPHP, the interagency workgroups, and the National Center for Health Statistics together create a strong foundation for Healthy People to remain a relevant and data-driven initiative.

Data 2020 contains data for all Healthy People objectives, and not only are the data exported to the Healthy People website here on the upper right-hand side of the slide, we also provide the data to the HHS Health Indicators Warehouse, to the National Prevention Strategy which came about as a result of the Affordable Care Act, and other HHS initiatives such as the National Healthcare Disparities and Quality reports.

Over 200 unique data sources are used to measure Healthy People objectives, both from governmental and nongovernmental sources. Federal examples include many of the agencies within HHS such as FDA, HERSA and NIH, and other departments as well provide data such as EPA, HUD, DOJ, FBI and the Department of Ed. A couple of good non-federal examples include the Association of American Medical Colleges and the Association of Public Health Laboratories.

As you might imagine, receiving data from so many different sources creates quite a significant data coordination and integration challenge, but we have developed a system that is able to handle data from all of these different sources.

You can find complete information about Healthy People data sources online at HealthyPeople.gov. Here, you can see the sources are listed A-to-Z, starting with the letter A.

A complete overview of each objective can be found in what we call the objective blocks. The objective blocks, one of which is circled here, include: the objective statement, which is the descriptor of the indicator; the baseline, which provides data showing the status for the indicator at the beginning of the decade; the target, which is the benchmark for the indicator that as a nation the topic area workgroups determine should be met by the end of the decade; the target setting method; the data source; and a link to view the data.

Here's a screenshot of the page on the website HealthyPeople.gov where the data can be searched. First, click on the data tab, then go to search the data in the navigation list on the left.

This is an example of a search result for the objective that tracks invasive colorectal cancer. You first select the population groups and demographic breakouts of interest, then click on view populations, and voilà, the results appear.

Here, we're viewing estimates for the three most recent years for which data are available for the total population, and breakouts by sex, race and ethnicity. We also selected the option to not only show the estimates, but also the confidence intervals and the standard error.
To view the technical specifications for an objective, including more information on how the numerator and denominator are derived, you can click on the tech specs link in the upper right-hand corner.

For each topic area, national snapshots are available which provide what the workgroup identified as the most compelling data for the topic area that can be readily displayed.

For the chronic kidney disease topic area, you can see for adults with chronic kidney disease the percent of those who have awareness of their impaired renal function, and for the same population, another example is the percent who received recommended medical evaluation over the past three years broken out by race and ethnicity, with the 2020 target displayed to see where we are relative to that benchmark. Note that some populations have met or exceeded the target, while others have not.

Here's an example of the Leading Health Indicator section of HealthyPeople.gov. NCHS provides data interpretation and supports development of infographics that elucidate disparities between groups for these 26 leading health indicators.

Here, you can see one of the 26 indicators, suicide rate, broken out by sex, and the rate for males was nearly four times that of the rate for females in 2011.

This illustration depicts the major milestones in the Healthy People 2020 decade, starting off with the launch in 2010 followed by progress reviews, which provide a picture of progress for each topic area sometime after the launch. Then, we'll begin work on the midcourse review in 2015 and anticipate publishing an online report of progress across any objectives for which we have at least two data points available for analysis at that time, followed by a final set of the progress reviews, because there's 42 topic areas, and then the final review, which will start at the end of the decade and aim to publish in 2021 reporting on final results for all objectives as well as the four 2020 overarching goals.

This next graph illustrates the type of data we aim to use for the progress reviews to drill down on progress for specific objectives and identify any issues that the data point to.

The data for this objective are a best-case scenario with annual reporting available. The graph provides data from across a decade for the Healthy People objective that tracks female breast cancer deaths in the U.S. We can see that over the decade, rates trended downward, but for the total population, the target has not been met. We also can see significant disparities across race and ethnicity. The trend shown for this objective here are unfortunately indicative of the situation for numerous objectives.

This illustration here is a clip from the 2010 final review. It provides a straightforward illustration of progress for objectives organized by topic area. Noting the center column, you can quickly identify those objectives that actually went away from their target with the red
arrow going to the left, and the objectives that either met or exceeded their target going to the right in the darker blue.

So, the key takeaways are that data are an essential driving force underlying Healthy People, and the data illustrate important trends we might not otherwise be able to identify, and in this case, we noted the persistent health disparities.

Sustained data collection has to be a priority or we are unable to identify trends over time, and effective communication of findings is always key to inform programmatic resource and policy decision making.

I hope this segment has provided a useful introduction to Healthy People data used for tracking progress of objectives. You will be provided with further information on specific website links for further exploration of the materials introduced here today.

Thank you.