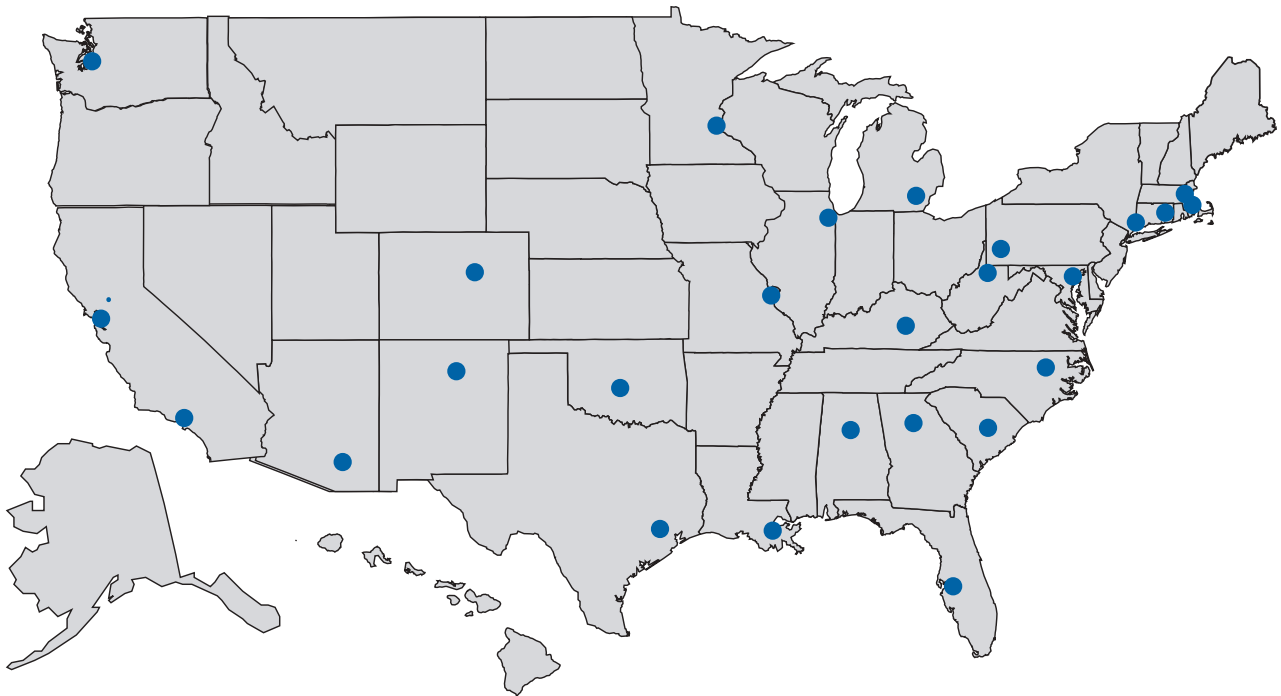


Prevention Research Centers: Linking Science to Practice 2002

CDC's Network of Prevention Research Centers, Fiscal Year 2001



“What better way to make health promotion research relevant than to involve the community in deciding which research should be done? All Americans have a stake in preventing disease and in bringing new ideas home to their neighbors and peers.”

Mary Woolley
President, Research!America

Addressing Health Disparities and Other Priority Health Problems

Individual behaviors and environmental factors cause many chronic diseases—such as cancer, heart disease, arthritis, and diabetes—as well as injuries and some infections. Prevention researchers develop strategies to help people reduce risk factors in their lives and their communities. By involving community members, academic researchers, and public health agencies in study projects, the Prevention Research Centers find innovative ways to promote health and prevent disease. Together the partners design, test, and disseminate strategies—often as new policies or recommended public health practices.

The Prevention Research Centers were first authorized by Congress in 1984, and the first three centers were funded two years later. Today 26 centers associated with schools of public health, medicine, or osteopathy are located throughout the country. Each center, selected through a competitive process, conducts at least one core research project with an underserved

population that has a disproportionately large burden of death and disability. In many of these populations, the health disparities are related to adverse socioeconomic conditions. The centers work with groups as diverse as women, adolescents, and the elderly and in areas as geographically distinct as Harlem, Appalachia, and the Southwest.

In addition to conducting core research, the centers work with partners on special interest projects defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services. Expertise gained from this work makes the centers competitive for additional research funding from other sources. The centers balance principles of scientific rigor, community acceptance, and practical application to find ways to improve the quality of life for Americans today and for future generations.

Prevention Research Centers

Research Themes

University of Washington at Seattle	Keeping Older People Healthy and Independent Through Community Partnerships
University of California at Berkeley	Engaging Families, Neighborhoods, and Communities in Chronic Disease Prevention
University of California at Los Angeles	Promoting the Health and Well-Being of Adolescents
University of Arizona	Promoting the Health of Multi-Ethnic Communities of the Southwest
University of Colorado	Promoting Healthy Lifestyles in Rural Communities
University of New Mexico	Promoting Healthy Lifestyles in American Indian Communities
University of Oklahoma	Promoting Health and Preventing Disease in Native Americans
University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston	Growing from Healthy Children to Healthy Adults
Tulane University	Preventing Environmental Diseases
Saint Louis University	Preventing Chronic Disease in High-Risk Communities
University of Minnesota	Preventing Teen Pregnancy and Promoting Healthy Youth Development
University of Illinois at Chicago	Controlling Diabetes in Communities
University of Michigan	Improving Health in Partnership with Families and Communities
University of Kentucky	Controlling Cancer in Central Appalachia
University of Alabama at Birmingham	Reducing Health Risks Among African Americans and Other Underserved People
Morehouse School of Medicine	Promoting Risk Reduction and Early Detection in African American and Other Minority Communities: Coalitions for Prevention Research
University of South Florida	Using Community-Based Prevention Marketing for Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
University of South Carolina	Promoting Health Through Physical Activity
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Improving Community Health Through Workplace Health Promotion
West Virginia University	Promoting Health and Preventing Disease in Rural Appalachia
The Johns Hopkins University	Promoting the Health of Adolescents Through Families and Communities
University of Pittsburgh	Promoting Health and Preventing Disease Among Older Adults
Columbia University	Putting Health Promotion into Action
Yale University	Creating Innovative Public Health Initiatives
Boston University	Improving the Well-Being of Public Housing Residents
Harvard University	Promoting Nutrition and Physical Activity Among Children and Youth

Merging Research and Practice

The Prevention Research Centers serve as a national resource for developing effective prevention strategies and applying those strategies at the community level. The following examples demonstrate how these strategies are being used.

Helping Children Become Healthy Adults

The Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health Program (CATCH) exemplifies the prevention centers' long-term commitment to identifying effective programs and making them part of everyday life. First, researchers from four universities designed and tested the CATCH curriculum in 96 elementary schools. The results showed that CATCH improved children's nutrition and increased their physical activity and thus could help prevent the later development of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center then explored how to promote CATCH statewide. A theoretical model that included marketing techniques, interpersonal networking, and media communications was used to develop a plan for getting the program into Texas schools. Since 1996, more than 850 schools in Texas have adopted CATCH, and over 2,000 school staff have been trained to use it.

Helping Seniors Stay Healthy and Active

Prevention research often benefits research participants while results are being explored. Seattle-area seniors are contributing to and benefitting from research conducted by the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center, one of two Prevention Research Centers focusing on healthy aging. (The other is at the University of Pittsburgh.) In senior centers, managed care programs, and other settings, researchers are testing strategies to help seniors remain healthy and independent. For example, interventions addressing minor depression through counseling, social activities, and group exercise programs are improving participants' physical and mental health.

Developing Community Capacity to Sustain Research Benefits

An important measure of the success of community-based research is how well a community can sustain healthy behaviors and activities after researchers are

gone. The Prevention Research Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham has helped to develop this capacity to maintain the benefits of research projects in a community in rural Alabama, where about 40% of residents have incomes below the poverty line. Initially, research focused on ways to reduce risk factors for heart disease, stroke, and cancer in the community. As part of the project, community health workers were trained and a community health council was formed. Both of these groups used other community resources to strengthen the community infrastructure. These linkages led to additional projects, including ones to install smoke detectors in homes, enrich school programs, provide nutrition education to area residents, and develop farmers' markets to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables. These projects are sustaining the benefits of the initial research project. Similar achievements have occurred in areas where other prevention centers work—such as Missouri's Bootheel and American Indian reservations.

Understanding Research Use

The Prevention Research Centers at the University of New Mexico and the University of North Carolina are exploring how research results make their way into practices that are embraced by community residents. At the University of New Mexico, researchers are examining eight community-based public health projects completed in the past 5 years to determine how research informed each project and which pieces of the research were critical to the projects' ongoing success. The projects are diverse; for example, one looked for ways to prevent the reoccurrence of driving while intoxicated, and another focused on developing policies to reduce exposure to second-hand cigarette smoke. At the University of North Carolina, prevention scientists are tracing how practitioners have put guidelines for managing diabetes into practice. The two prevention centers are also collaborating with CDC on reviewing and summarizing the scientific literature on research use. These efforts will help public health professionals and agencies improve the process of putting prevention research findings into practice. They will also make it easier for promising prevention research results to be used with different populations.

Capitalizing on Unique Opportunities for Research and Collaboration

“The arrangement affords an ideal combination of talents—a public health agency’s experience in working with high-risk populations and the research skills of a health sciences center.”

*—Bert Malone, Director, Division of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services*

Range of Disciplines

Each Prevention Research Center encourages interaction among faculty from different disciplines, who bring an array of expertise to each project. This blending of expertise is essential to solving complex health and psychosocial problems. Departments of education, social work, psychology, nursing, and many others work with the schools of public health and medicine. In addition, CDC’s prevention centers network allows centers to collaborate with each other.

Wealth of Partners

The prevention centers work closely with state and local health departments, managed care alliances and health maintenance organizations, state education agencies, and national and community-based organizations. Through these partnerships, promising research findings are translated into practical, cost-effective prevention programs and applied at the community level.

Knowledge of Community Needs

Long-standing relationships between academic institutions and their communities bring public health researchers close to the people they serve. Because of ties to surrounding communities, researchers can design and introduce prevention strategies tailored to these communities. By understanding community attitudes and beliefs and by making the most of community resources, researchers can simultaneously address multiple health risk factors.

Resource for Training

In collaboration with the Association of Schools of Public Health, the Prevention Research Centers

program has established a 2-year fellowship for doctoral-level students of minority ethnic or racial origin. This fellowship offers promising public health professionals hands-on experience with projects directed by the Prevention Research Centers. This fellowship program also expands the number of future public health professionals qualified to work with minority ethnic or racial groups.

Future Directions

The Prevention Research Centers’ future is shaped by two main endeavors: evaluation and expanded collaboration. A project is now under way to develop a plan for evaluating the Prevention Research Centers program. Through the evaluation project, the centers and their partners are developing models to describe the centers’ collective attributes, designing templates for documenting the effects of the centers’ work, and establishing criteria for judging how well aims have been achieved. This evaluation plan will be used to improve program operations and to meet the accountability requirements of the program’s diverse local and national stakeholders. Initiatives are also under way to increase collaboration with federal and nonfederal partners. For example, the Prevention Research Centers are developing ways to strengthen partnerships with the Association of State and Territorial Chronic Disease Directors and the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education. The Prevention Research Centers also continue to encourage community partners throughout the country to contribute to prevention research.

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