

ACTION TOOLKIT:

JUNE 2016

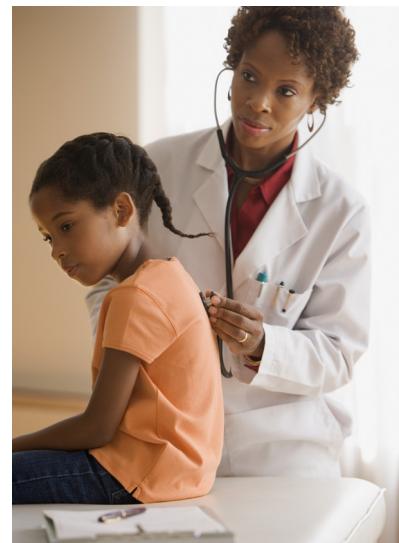
**Enhancing chronic and infectious disease prevention and management in
St. Louis****TAKE ACTION!**
Be part of the solution.

There are many steps you can take to invest
in preventing illness for all in St. Louis.

You don't have to be a health care professional or policymaker to improve health in St. Louis. There are many steps you can take as an individual to improve disease prevention and management for all. This toolkit will offer up a number of opportunities to share what you've learned about chronic and infectious diseases from the companion *Discussion Guide*, to support organizations doing good work in these areas, advocate on behalf of those dealing with these diseases, and address racial health disparities for the benefit of all in our region. Be a leader and help create change in your community!

Educate and inform:

- Read the companion [Discussion Guide](#).
- Read the *For the Sake of All* brief: [Chronic Disease in St. Louis: Progress for Better Health](#).
- Review the [Four Domains of Chronic Disease Prevention](#) from the CDC.
- Find out your own risk for diseases such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and osteoporosis at [Your Disease Risk](#). This online assessment tool also offers tips for reducing your risk through lifestyle and environmental changes and screenings.
- Watch the PBS documentary [Unnatural Causes](#) examining racial and economic disparities in health.
- Visit the [Healthy People 2020](#) website to learn more about the federal initiative's health priorities, which include improving access to health and preventative services, addressing obesity, and reducing tobacco use. You can also search and view data on the progress toward these goals.
- Explore how other communities are addressing chronic and infectious diseases and improving health through the [Healthy Communities Navigator](#). When searching by location or topic, be sure to click on "Stories" to view details and outcomes.
- [Check out how Missouri stacks up](#) in terms of key health indicators, from hypertension and diabetes rates to fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Learn more about the role of community health workers in addressing chronic and infectious diseases in this [policy brief](#).
- View the latest [State of Obesity](#) reports, and learn how the [Let's Move](#) campaign is working to address this epidemic among our nation's youth.
- If you're an employer, HR professional, or manager, learn how you can improve health and wellness for your organization's employees using the [CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard](#).
- [Operation Food Search](#) offers a number of educational presentations and cooking demonstrations on topics ranging from diabetic-friendly meals to affordable nutrition. Host a presentation at your school, church, community center, or organization.
- Review the [St. Louis County Community Health Improvement Plan](#) and the [City of St. Louis Community Health Improvement Plan](#).
- Visit the [LiveWellSTL](#) website to find resources and events aimed at healthy living; you can also submit events for free.



Volunteer and donate:

There are many organizations in our region focused on addressing the needs of those managing chronic diseases, preventing the spread of infectious diseases, and promoting healthy lifestyles and behaviors. You can serve on volunteer boards and committees, plan events, assist with advocacy efforts, or help with administrative tasks. Besides volunteering, you can also provide support through fundraising and donations.

Here are a few examples in the St. Louis region:

- [Oasis](#), which serves adults 50 and over, offers a number of health prevention and promotion programs, including fitness and cooking classes, health screenings, and disease management classes. The organization welcomes volunteers to lead exercise classes, organize walks, and teach educational programs; training is provided.
- Connect with the local/regional chapters of some of the national organizations addressing chronic diseases, such as the [American Heart Association](#), [American Cancer Society](#), [American Diabetes Association](#), [National Kidney Foundation](#), or [American Lung Association](#). In addition to research and advocacy, these organizations provide a number of services for patients and the general public, including support groups, case management resources, and prevention education.
- [GO! St. Louis](#) encourages individuals and families to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle year-round through a variety of events. Volunteers provide support for the annual Marathon & Family Fitness Weekend as well as youth programs and other races.
- Get involved with the [Asthma & Allergy Foundation of St. Louis](#), which provides resources, medication assistance, and screenings for youth and adults dealing with or at risk for asthma.
- If you're a health care professional, pre-med, or nursing student, [CHIPS Health and Wellness Center](#) welcomes volunteers to help with clinical tasks or to serve as educators in the community.
- Both the [City of St. Louis Department of Health](#) and [St. Louis County Department of Public Health](#) utilize volunteers for a range of tasks and projects.

In addition to volunteering with an established organization, there are many ways you can help support healthy behaviors in your community or in neighborhoods throughout the region; from coaching a youth sports team to donating healthy options to a food pantry. Most importantly, you can be a model to your children, family, friends, and others by adopting and encouraging a healthy lifestyle.



Organize and advocate:

- Launch a wellness program at your company or organization. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) offer a comprehensive toolkit, training, and assessments. You may also want to check with your organization's health insurance provider for resources and ideas.
- Advocate for policies that improve access to affordable health care, support evidence-based health promotion programs, provide screenings and assessments, address health inequities, and encourage healthy behaviors. Write to or call your local and state policy makers, such as members of the [Missouri Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#).
- If you are a parent to a teen or work with teens, encourage them to become trained [Teenage Health Consultants](#) to share information on healthy behaviors and community resources with their peers.



- Write a letter to the editor or op-ed to increase awareness around chronic or infectious disease management and prevention. Advocate to make healthy choices and equal health care access available to all in our community. Use the provided talking points.
- Apply for a [KaBoom!](#) grant to install or enhance a playground in a neighborhood that is lacking this resource, or get involved in a neighborhood watch program to help improve overall safety and security.
- The demand and need for community health workers are expected to increase in the coming years, as their outreach and interventions have been shown to provide a four-fold return on investment. Advocate for policies that expand support for community health workers, including education, training, and resources.



Use these when informing others about investing in preventing illness.

TALKING POINTS

Talking points:

- Chronic and infectious diseases can affect the quality and overall length of our lives, and they have a substantial impact on our health care system and our region.
- Nearly 86% of all health care spending is for patients with at least one chronic disease. In St. Louis alone, if we could reduce the racial disparities in chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, our region would save \$65 million a year in inpatient hospital charges.
- While behaviors and lifestyle can impact the incidence and severity of chronic diseases, we have to consider the overall environment and social context. Our goal should be to put healthy options within the reach of all in St. Louis.
- Chronic diseases affect African Americans disproportionately in our region, from disease incidence and hospitalization to treatment access and death rates.
- To prevent and manage chronic and infectious diseases, we have to be aware of and willing to address social and economic barriers to health, both in medical settings and in public policy.
- We can also improve overall health by supporting healthy behaviors in our community, such as providing safe spaces to play and exercise, improving availability of healthy food options, and making preventative care accessible to all.



Sample social media posts:

When using these sample posts, make sure to include a link to the *For the Sake of All* website: <http://forthesakeofall.org>.



When it comes to your health, your ZIP code is more important than your genetic code. Learn why: <https://forthesakeofall.org>

Nearly half of all adults in the U.S. must manage at least 1 chronic disease, but it's an issue that affects us all: <https://forthesakeofall.org>

If we reduce the disparity in diseases like cancer & diabetes, STL could save \$65 million/yr in hospital charges: <https://forthesakeofall.org>

Our ability to make healthy choices is limited by the choices available to us - learn how to improve health in STL: <https://forthesakeofall.org>

Healthy options shouldn't be limited by your ZIP code. Learn how you can help improve health for all in #STL: <https://forthesakeofall.org>

Chronic diseases can affect us all, but African Americans are more likely to die from them. Learn how you can help: <https://forthesakeofall.org>

Chronic and infectious diseases don't have to be a death sentence – you can help improve prevention & management: <https://forthesakeofall.org>



RESOURCES

- » The [St. Louis County Department of Public Health](#) and [City of St. Louis Department of Health](#) provide a variety of services, including low-cost/free health centers, sexually transmitted infection testing, communicable disease monitoring, and health promotion programs.
- » The [St. Louis Integrated Health Network](#) maintains an index of community health centers for patients seeking affordable services. The organization also has established several workgroups to increase care and coordination across providers, such as the Community Referral Coordinator and Transitions of Care initiatives.
- » The St. Louis Regional Health Commission's [Gateway to Better Health](#) pilot program has been extended through the end of 2016. Since 2010, the program has provided access to primary and specialty health care services for approximately 22,000 low-income, uninsured individuals in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County.
- » [Cover Missouri](#) is a coalition working to reduce the number of uninsured Missourians by building awareness, facilitating enrollment, and increasing health insurance literacy. The initiative offers a number of online resources and tools as well as in-person events and assistance for those struggling to get coverage.
- » Based in St. Louis, [Rx Outreach](#) is a national nonprofit mail-order pharmacy designed to provide affordable medications for those with chronic conditions.
- » [St. Louis MetroMarket](#) is a nonprofit mobile farmers' market. The organization has transformed a donated city bus into a grocery store on wheels to restore access to healthy, affordable food in St. Louis city food deserts.
- » The [St. Louis Area Agency on Aging](#) promotes healthier aging within the City of St. Louis and provides disease self-management classes, health screenings/assessments, and medication management programs.
- » A number of area agencies offer free HIV/STD testing, including [The SPOT](#) (for ages 13-24), [Saint Louis Effort for AIDS](#) (including mobile outreach), [Project Ark](#), [ThriVe St. Louis](#), [Planned Parenthood](#), and many community health clinics.
- » Besides in-clinic services, [CHIPS Health & Wellness Center](#) utilizes community health nurses and outreach workers to deliver its Health Care Beyond Walls program.
- » The [JUMP N2 Shape](#) program, managed by the City of St. Louis, is a regional challenge to reduce obesity in our community by five percent by 2018. The initiative offers a free online program and mobile app to help participants achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- » Siteman Cancer Center's [Program for the Elimination of Cancer Disparities](#) aims to create a national model for addressing local and regional inequities in cancer education, prevention, and treatment.
- » Established in 2011, the [St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project](#) adds healthy options to the food available at small corner stores and markets in the city, primarily in neighborhoods without adequate supermarkets.



DISCUSSION GUIDE:

JUNE 2016

Enhancing chronic and infectious disease prevention and management in St. Louis



PURPOSE

This *Discussion Guide* focuses on the recommendation to “coordinate and expand chronic and infectious disease prevention and management.” We encourage you to use the *Action Toolkit* that accompanies this *Discussion Guide* to identify ways to bring this conversation to your community and take steps to invest in chronic and infectious disease prevention and management for all in St. Louis. A digital version of both the *Discussion Guide* and the *Action Toolkit*, with additional resources, is available at <http://forthesakeoffall.org>.



BACKGROUND

Chronic diseases are long-lasting conditions that impact an individual’s health and well-being. Although these diseases generally cannot be cured, they can be prevented and managed.¹ The chances are good that you or someone you know is dealing with a chronic disease, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or asthma. As of 2012, nearly half of all US adults had at least one chronic disease, and 25% had more than one.²

The impact of chronic disease goes beyond the individual to affect families, communities, and our nation, leading to decreased productivity and increased health care costs. In 2010, the U.S. spent \$2.6 trillion on health care,³ and 86% of that spending was for patients with one or more chronic disease.⁴ The ultimate impact of chronic disease is shortened life spans, with heart disease and cancer alone accounting for nearly half of all deaths nationally.⁵

While chronic diseases have many causes, infectious diseases are caused by an organism, such as a bacteria or a virus. We’ve seen many improvements in prevention, care, and management over the last century, but infectious diseases like pneumonia are still a major cause of death and disability, and the incidence of some diseases like measles have shown increases despite the availability of safe and effective vaccines. In addition, some infectious diseases, such as HPV (human papilloma virus) and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), can lead to more serious chronic diseases.

Health factors

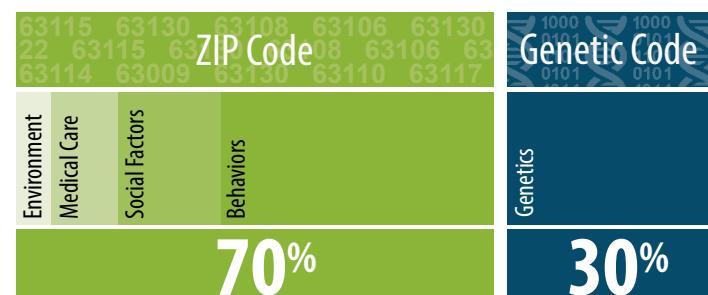
Although genetics contribute to premature deaths (30%), factors related to environments account for the remaining 70%.⁶ These non-genetic factors include individual behaviors like diet, exercise,

and smoking (40%); social factors like poverty and education (15%); medical care (10%); and exposure to toxins, pollutants, and other hazards (5%).⁶

Behaviors are the largest contributor among these factors. As important as behaviors are to health, they happen within a social context. The choice between a healthy and unhealthy behavior is often heavily influenced by an individual’s environment and the options available. Even in the best of circumstances, changing behavior is difficult, so it helps to understand the forces at work in an individual’s life.⁷

With the growing awareness that the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play have a significant impact on their health, we are learning that an individual’s race and ZIP code may be a better determinant of their risk for disease than their genetic code.⁸

ZIP code can influence health even more than genetic code



Percent of factors influenced by ZIP code and genetic code that contribute to premature death⁶

The state of chronic and infectious disease in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County

While chronic and infectious diseases shape the overall health of our region, they do not affect everyone equally.

In the St. Louis area, African Americans have a higher rate of risk factors such as hypertension and obesity and are diagnosed more frequently with chronic diseases than whites.⁹

Among those dealing with chronic diseases, we also see a greater incidence of hospitalization and death for African Americans. In 2013, African Americans were hospitalized at nearly twice the rate of whites for heart disease, four times the rate for diabetes, and six times the rate for asthma.¹⁰ African Americans also face a higher rate of death for many chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and several types of cancers.¹¹

Compared with whites, African Americans in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County have higher hospitalization rates due to chronic diseases and conditions

2X
HIGHER
hospitalization
rate due to
Heart Disease

4X
HIGHER
hospitalization
rate due to
Diabetes

6X
HIGHER
hospitalization
rate due to
Asthma

Source: MODHSS, Chronic Disease MICA, 2013

Notes: Rates are per 10,000 and age adjusted using 2000 standard population



Our ability to lead a healthy lifestyle and make healthy choices is affected by our environment. In a 2011 survey, only 38% of African Americans living in the City of St. Louis considered their neighborhood to be safe, compared with 66% of whites, which may explain the higher percentage of African Americans reporting no leisure time physical activity.⁹ In addition, although eating recommended levels of fruits and vegetables is a problem for whites and African Americans, Africans Americans are less likely than whites to report that they have access to healthy food, which poses an additional barrier to maintaining a healthy diet.⁹

Access to quality and affordable health care is also key to preventing and managing disease. In 2014, African Americans in St. Louis were more than twice as likely as whites to be uninsured.¹⁵ But access goes beyond insurance. For example, there are relatively few primary care physicians practicing in neighborhoods that are predominantly African American.¹⁶ Without easy access to preventative and ongoing care, conditions go untreated, and ER visits increase. Research has shown that if we could reduce the disparity in chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, St. Louis could save \$65 million a year in inpatient hospital charges.

**REDUCING THE DISPARITY IN
CHRONIC DISEASES COULD
SAVE ST. LOUIS**

\$65 MILLION
PER YEAR IN INPATIENT HOSPITAL CHARGES

Unfortunately, these racial differences aren't limited to chronic diseases. African Americans also have higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases, including gonorrhea, chlamydia, HIV, and AIDS.¹² It is important to understand that these higher rates are not the result of differences in individual sexual behaviors but are more likely to be the result of social conditions that disproportionately affect minorities.¹³ These higher rates are particularly concerning when you consider that African Americans are 17 times more likely to die from AIDS than whites.¹¹

As with chronic diseases, African Americans are also hospitalized more frequently for a range of infections, from hepatitis to tuberculosis, and are more often treated in the emergency room for these conditions.^{10,14}

For both chronic and infectious diseases, prevention and early diagnosis are important. But for many African Americans in St. Louis, challenges remain—both in access to health care and barriers to leading a healthy lifestyle.



STRATEGIES

Because of the many factors that impact health, preventing chronic and infectious disease is not easy. But there are things we as a region can do to improve the health of all in our community.

Address social and economic barriers to health in medical settings

Preventing and treating disease is about more than just medical care. It's important for health care professionals to recognize the social and economic factors that affect their patients' health. This starts with asking different questions and collecting data that paints a more complete picture of patient needs. The Institute of Medicine and American Academy of Pediatrics recently recommended that health care providers screen patients for factors such as education, financial resource strain, and stress.^{17,18}

By collecting additional data, health care providers are able to screen and track patient needs and partner with the patient on treatment and disease management. For example, patient ability to understand and carry out treatment plans may be affected by education, language, literacy, and financial situation.⁷

In addition to addressing the social and economic factors that impact health, this data helps to bridge gaps in care. As an example, Accountable Health Communities (AHC) is an approach to health care that seeks to enhance the connections between clinical and community services, resulting in improved health outcomes and reduced costs. The approach specifies four elements of comprehensive interventions—screening, referral, navigation, and care delivery—with a focus on connecting these points across the continuum of care.¹⁹

As required by the Affordable Care Act, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid established the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI). In January 2016, CMMI released a funding opportunity to test the AHC model over a five-year period and assess how identifying and addressing health-related social needs impacts health care costs and utilization.¹⁹ A team that includes several major institutions in St. Louis has submitted an application to obtain this funding for our region.

Expand access to Community Health Workers

Community Health Workers (CHW) have an extensive history as health promoters in other countries, and they became popular in the United States in the 1960s.²⁰ CHWs have resurfaced at points since then as a response to social injustice and inequity.²⁰ As their name implies, CHWs work at the community level to promote health and help prevent disease.²¹ CHWs are able to spend ample time with patients, assist them in making behavioral changes, and help to address barriers by providing education, counseling, social support, and advocacy as well as accessing community resources.²¹

Research has found that CHWs can have a positive impact on chronic and infectious disease, helping to reduce health disparities, expanding

access to coverage and care, and improving health outcomes, such as increased immunization rates and tuberculosis cure rates.²² Investing in CHWs shows positive returns. For example, a pilot study among children with asthma in Chicago found a 35% reduction in symptom frequency, a 75% reduction in utilization of urgent care, and a savings of \$5.58 per dollar spent on the intervention.²³ Recent changes in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid associated with the Affordable Care Act allow CHWs to be reimbursed through Medicaid, which could expand access further.²¹

Local examples include:

- [People's Health Centers](#) provide health care and social services to thousands of uninsured and underserved people at three locations in St. Louis. The centers also offer client-centered cluster visits, community health education, nursing, mobile van outreach, school-linked services, and preventive health services.
- [Casa de Salud](#) focuses on providing health services to new immigrants and refugees who encounter barriers to accessing other sources of care. Just as importantly, the organization helps patients navigate the health care system through its “Guides for Understanding, Information, and Access” (GUIA) program.

Support healthy behaviors

We can also support healthy behaviors within our communities by improving access to fresh fruit and vegetables, creating safe spaces for play and exercise, and providing smoking cessation programs to make it easier for residents to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Local examples include:

- The [St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project](#) was established in 2011 to encourage store owners to add healthy food options at small corner stores and markets in the city.
- With support from Express Scripts, Beyond Housing's [Passport 2 Health](#) program provides residents in the Normandy School District with access to free health resources such as fitness classes and walking groups in the community.



SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Chronic and infectious diseases affect not only individuals but our entire region, in the form of increased health care costs, reduced productivity and quality of life, and shortened life spans.
- When it comes to chronic and infectious diseases, ZIP code often is more important than genetic code. We must look beyond individual behaviors and risk factors and consider the broader social and economic factors affecting health.
- Strategies for improving health in our region should include addressing social and economic barriers, expanding access to community health workers, and supporting healthy behaviors.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you know someone dealing with a chronic disease? If so, what challenges do they face? What could be done to reduce these challenges or improve their quality of life?
- Think about the community in which you live. In what ways does it encourage (or discourage) healthy behavior?
- What obstacles to leading a healthy lifestyle exist in the St. Louis region? How could we eliminate these obstacles?
- Why are the rates of chronic disease diagnosis, hospitalization, and death different between African Americans and whites?
- Do you feel there is a stigma around certain chronic or infectious diseases in our community? If so, how does it affect the care and management of these conditions?
- What gaps do you see in our region in the prevention or care of chronic and/or infectious disease?
- How should our region be address and prevent chronic and infectious disease among youth?
- Do you know your personal risk factors for chronic disease? What could you do to reduce these risk factors or improve your overall health?
- Who in the St. Louis community is currently working to address chronic and infectious disease? What could be done to support these efforts?
- What would you be willing to do to help improve the prevention, care, and management of chronic and infectious disease?



Missouri Foundation
for Health

Funding for this project was provided in part by Missouri Foundation for Health. The Foundation is a resource for the region, working with communities and nonprofits to generate and accelerate positive changes in health.

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