

SECTION 3

PILLAR OBJECTIVES AND
OVERARCHING FOCUS AREAS

*Everyone Living
Better, Longer*

*Healthiest
Wisconsin
2020*



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INTRODUCTION

Ten objectives for *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* are called Pillar Objectives, because without them there will not be a sustainable structure to support the plan's vision, goals and mission. Because they are crucial to *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020*, all 10 of the Pillar Objectives deserve everyone's attention and work across the decade.

Five of these Pillar Objectives are derived from the plan's two Overarching Focus Areas: Health Disparities and Social, Economic and Educational Factors that Influence Health. These affect all the Health and Infrastructure Focus Areas. They speak to the heart of the *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* goals of improving health across the life span, and eliminating health disparities and achieving health equity for all.

An additional five Pillar Objectives emerged from themes that cut across many of the Health and Infrastructure Focus Areas. The attainment of these five objectives will work synergistically to accelerate and sustain progress on virtually all of the other *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* objectives. They represent concrete ways to align policies and systems for health, a key plan concept.

This section lists and describes the 10 Pillar Objectives, and explains why each is critical to the work of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020*. Where indicators have been identified to measure progress, those indicators are included with the Pillar Objective description. For five of the Pillar Objectives, indicators will need to be developed as part of the first phase of plan implementation.

OVERARCHING FOCUS AREAS AND THEIR PILLAR OBJECTIVES

Healthiest Wisconsin's two Overarching Focus Areas, Health Disparities and Social, Economic and Educational Factors that Influence Health, affect all of the other 21 focus areas. They speak to the heart of the *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* goals of improving health across the life span, and eliminating health disparities and achieving health equity for all.

More detailed information on each focus area will be published separately on the Web at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/hw2020/>.

Health disparities

Why is this focus area important?

Health disparities exist when differences in health outcomes consistently occur among people of different characteristics, including (among others) race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and identification, gender identity, and disability. *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* seeks to progressively and permanently eliminate these disparities in the state, some of which rank among the worst in the nation. These disparities violate the values of justice and fairness, and they interfere with creating a healthy social and physical environment for all of us.

Pillar Objective 1 (Comprehensive data to track health disparities)

By 2020, in partnership with members of affected populations, the Department of Health Services will develop and enforce policies and procedures to track social determinants of health, health outcomes and system effectiveness in populations experiencing health disparities.

Objective 1 Indicator

Periodic inventory of data sets on health outcomes, social determinants of health and system effectiveness that include comparable information on race, ethnicity, sexual identity and orientation, gender identity, education, economic status, and disability. (Indicator to be developed.)

Pillar Objective 2 (Resources to eliminate health disparities)

By 2020, the Department of Health Services, in collaboration with policy makers, private institutions, and affected communities, will fund efforts to eliminate health disparities at least equal to the Midwest state average.

Objective 2 Indicator

Wisconsin per-capita funding targeted toward health disparities relative to other Midwest states.

Social, economic, and educational factors that influence health

Why is this focus area important?

Social, economic, and educational factors that influence health are estimated to be responsible for as much as 40 percent of the variation in health outcomes between different populations. They include income and wealth, education, and the quality of key human needs like shelter, food and security. They also include healthy social connections between people, which are critical to health from birth to old age. Together these factors are essential to many other health determinants, including healthy physical and social environments (in homes, schools, workplaces and neighborhoods); adoption of healthy behaviors and choices; healthy intellectual and economic achievement; and for communities to protect their health effectively in a crisis.

Pillar Objective 3 (Policies to reduce discrimination and increase social cohesion)

By 2020, state and local governments will develop and implement policies and programs that improve social cohesion and social support for all by reducing racism and other forms of discrimination; creating health-enhancing environments at home, in the workplace and throughout the community; and promoting the values of diversity and social connectedness.

Objective 3 Indicators

- Periodic reporting on one or more indices reflecting social cohesion or segregation between populations of differing races, ethnicities, sexual identities and orientations, gender identities, and educational or economic status. (Indicator to be developed.)
- Periodic inventory of relevant policies and programs. (Indicator to be developed.)

Pillar Objective 4 (Policies to reduce poverty)

By 2020, local, state, and federal governments will develop and implement health-promoting policies and programs that reduce poverty to a residual level.

Objective 4 Indicators

- Prevalence of household poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey).

- Unemployment rates by race and ethnicity (U.S. Department of Labor).
- Periodic inventory of policy changes that promote healthy lifestyles (nutritional intake, physical activity) by race, ethnicity and economic status. (Indicator to be developed.)
- Periodic inventory of new state policies that address this objective. (Indicator to be developed.)

Pillar Objective 5 (Policies to improve education)

By 2020, state and local governments will develop and implement educational policies and practices supporting healthy outcomes, including universal early childhood education, universal completion of at least high school equivalency, and curricula in each community that support cultural competency, valuing diversity, health literacy and informed decision-making about health.

Objective 5 Indicators

- Graduation rates by race and ethnicity (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction).
- Graduation rates for schools in low-income geographic areas. (Indicator to be developed.)
- Periodic inventory of new state policies that address this objective. (Indicator to be developed.)

PILLAR OBJECTIVES FROM RECURRING THEMES

The following objectives emerged from themes that recur in many of the health and infrastructure focus areas. The attainment of these Pillar Objectives will accelerate and sustain progress on virtually all of the other *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* objectives. They represent major ways to align policies and systems for health.

Improved and connected health service systems

Accessible, high-quality, coordinated health and public health systems improve lifelong health and reduce disparities.

Pillar Objective 6

By 2020, improve Wisconsin's systems of primary health care; behavioral screening and intervention; services for mental health, alcohol and drug use, oral health, chronic disease management, and reproductive and sexual health;

and enable secure, appropriate information exchange to optimize health decisions by providers, patients, public health workers, and policy makers.

Why were health service systems singled out in this objective?

These health services were specifically identified by planning participants as highly important, but lacking consistent quality and universal accessibility in Wisconsin. Secure, privacy-protected health information technology can help individuals better manage their own health; help health care providers improve care safety, quality and coordination; and help public health professionals and policy makers identify threats to health and opportunities to improve it. This is a synergistic policy approach that aligns with many plan objectives.

Youth and families prepared to protect their health and the health of their community

The health and resilience of a community depend partly on the individual preparation of its members. The system of childhood education represents a systematic opportunity to improve the knowledge, skills, physical preparation, and plans of children and their families, both to achieve their own greatest health potential and to contribute to that of the community. When children and their families are fit, protected against health threats and resilient to deal with emergencies and crises, the whole community is healthier and safer.

Pillar Objective 7

By 2020, improve the health and resilience of youth and families to protect their health and the health of their communities through age-appropriate policies and curricula in child care centers and schools, in partnerships with educators, public health systems, and community-based agencies, that support recommended vaccinations, identify and refer potential childhood disabilities for care, establish healthy patterns of diet and activity, and equip children and their families with knowledge, attitudes and skills for basic child care and sick care; understanding health information and making health decisions; oral hygiene; non-violent conflict resolution; avoidance of tobacco, alcohol and substance abuse; injury prevention; home emergency preparedness; valuing diversity and inclusiveness; and establishing healthy relationships.

Why were child care centers and schools singled out in this objective?

School represents a central feature of our neighborhoods—a place of learning and a safe place of gathering for both young people and their families. No other institutional setting has equal capacity to reach out to the young with consistent curriculum and environmental conditions to foster skills for healthy living. Initiating healthy habits in early life is more effective, and far more cost-effective, than trying to change unhealthy habits later in life. School requirements have been the single most effective method of increasing population immunization rates, and schools already play an important role in screening and referral for developmental disabilities. Schools (both public and private) can only accomplish such ambitious goals if they receive support from governmental agencies, and from community-based providers of health care, youth development and other services. This is a synergistic policy approach that aligns with many plan objectives.

Environments that foster health and social networks

Communities should create and protect healthy environments for living, learning and working that help prevent illness, injury and toxic exposures and that foster healthy diet, physical activity and social interactions.

Pillar Objective 8

By 2020, implement community designs that foster safe and convenient foot, bicycle and public transportation, physical recreation, and food gardening to improve physical activity, healthy diets, and social interaction while reducing air and water pollution, carbon emissions, and urban heat retention.

Why was community design singled out in this objective?

Several focus area objectives emphasized the central role the built environment plays in combating the rapidly growing epidemic of obesity and overweight (which contribute to chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and cancer), and providing health benefits (for example, to musculoskeletal and mental health). Many of the same design features and transportation concepts that encourage regular physical activity can also help reduce injury, pollution, and global warming. Urban green spaces for recreation and gardening can reduce heat wave health effects in our cities and rapid rain runoff that affects water quality. Finally, such designs can help increase daily healthy social interactions between neighbors. This is a synergistic policy approach that aligns with many plan objectives.

Capability to evaluate the effectiveness and health impact of policies and programs

For greatest progress toward a healthier state, major policies should be analyzed before adoption to identify their likely impact on health. Health practices and systems should be guided by evidence based on evaluations of effectiveness. However, evidence of effectiveness is often lacking, and information about such evidence can be hard to find. Improved access to program evaluation and to the results of such evaluations can help improve the effectiveness of our public health system.

Pillar Objective 9

By 2020, create dedicated capacity in Wisconsin to perform health impact assessment of proposed major policy changes, and to compare and disseminate the effectiveness of alternative population health policies and practices.

Why is this objective important?

Achieving major change with limited resources requires that the work is efficiently aligned to get results. Sometimes state and local policies and systems pull in different directions and do not all support the health objectives identified in *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020*. To the extent that conflicts can be identified and addressed during the policy-making process, progress toward a healthier state can be accelerated. The need for using programs, policies and practices supported by evidence was stated repeatedly by *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* planning participants (and across many focus areas). This means either replicating practices found effective in rigorous evaluation, or conducting such evaluations where effectiveness is unknown. The institutional and workforce capability to perform these assessments at a statewide level was lacking during *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*. Growth in public health academic programs over the past decade is now creating a base for these important activities going forward. This is a synergistic policy approach that aligns with most plan objectives.

Resources for governmental public health infrastructure

Resources, including sustainable funding for both government and non-government entities, directed toward achieving *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* goals, including eliminating health disparities and performing essential government public health functions and services, are an investment with positive economic return. By preventing problems, financial and human capital is freed for productive, creative uses.

Pillar Objective 10

By 2020, increase sustainable local and state funding for governmental public health departments to at least the per-capita average of Region V states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin).

Why were governmental public health departments singled out in this objective?

Governmental public health departments, both state and local, are charged in statute with assuring that health improvement plans are created and implemented in their jurisdictions, and with providing core public health services. Public health decision-making is grounded in the science of cost-benefit analysis that shows the economic and health benefits of dollars invested in prevention. Public health departments also provide the day-to-day infrastructure for assessing and responding to current and emerging health conditions and assuring a minimum level of services. In the absence of strong public health departments, there is no coordinated accountability for continuous focus on the long-term cost-effectiveness of health investments and progress toward *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* goals. These department budgets are readily measured and compared. Because public health departments provide important infrastructure for *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020*, this is a synergistic policy approach that aligns with many plan objectives.

Summary

The 10 Pillar Objectives for *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020*, as they are achieved, will sustain and support the plan's vision, goals, and mission. Five of these Pillar Objectives are derived from the plan's Overarching Focus Areas: Health Disparities; and Social, Economic, and Educational Factors that Influence Health. The other five represent common themes found in many of the Infrastructure and Health Focus Areas.

Together these 10 Pillar Objectives represent major ways to align policies and systems for health, and accelerate progress toward improving health across the life span, eliminating health disparities and achieving health equity for all. Because these objectives are so important to the realization of the plan's highest goals, and because some of them are difficult to achieve, all *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* partners are asked to join in the work of achieving them, even as they also work on focus areas that may be closer to their day-to-day work or interests.

Reference

Trust for America's Health. 2008. Investments in disease prevention yield significant savings, stronger communities. Retrieved May 19, 2010 from <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/prevention08/>.

