VERMONT Blueprint for Health

Smart choices. Powerful tools.

The Facts About Chronic Conditions

FACT:

Chronic conditions are the leading cause of illness, disability and death in the United States.

FACT:

Seven out of every 10 Americans who die each year, die of a chronic disease.

FACT:

Over 50% of all adult Vermonters have one or more chronic conditions.

FACT:

Caring for people with chronic conditions consumes 70% of the $3.3 billion spent in Vermont each year on health care.

FACT:

Over 40% of the direct care cost for Americans with chronic conditions comes from public funds.

FACT:

The number of people with chronic conditions—and the cost of their care—is expected to double by the year 2050.

Sources:
Vermont Department of Health; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; National Institutes of Health; Center for Disease Control.

Chronic diseases are long-standing, persistent illnesses that are often not easily managed or quickly resolved. They are among the most prevalent and costly of all health problems. They are also the most preventable. These conditions present one of the most serious health challenges facing Vermont today, and, unless we act now, the problem will only get worse.

Common chronic diseases include arthritis, asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, lung disease, depression, diabetes, obesity, and osteoporosis. All are serious conditions which, if left untreated, can lead to the need for acute or emergency care — typically the most expensive and complex form of medical treatment.

And yet, most chronic diseases can be prevented. When they do occur, many such conditions can be successfully controlled by lifestyle changes, regular medical monitoring, early treatment, and medication.

The Vermont Blueprint for Health is a statewide initiative to provide Vermonters who have chronic conditions with the information, tools and support they need to successfully manage their health.

Launched by Governor Douglas in 2003 and endorsed in 2006 by the General Assembly under Act 191, the Vermont Blueprint for Health is already making significant progress in several communities. Continued legislative support for the Blueprint will ensure that more Vermonters will benefit, helping not only to improve their health but also to control the escalation of health care costs in our state.

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VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Vision

The increasing number of Vermonters who experience serious health complications from chronic conditions, and the escalating cost of their care, demands a response.

The Vermont Blueprint for Health is built on the premise that prevention and improved chronic illness care will result in:

• **A healthier population** through sound lifestyle choices, increased focus on prevention efforts, and support for community infrastructure that fosters physical activity.

• **Appropriate, timely, and effective medical treatment,** helping Vermonters to live longer, healthier lives.

• **Reduced demand for medical treatment services,** resulting in significant cost savings for government and individuals.

Approach

The Blueprint for Health is a new approach to giving Vermonters the tools they need to manage their chronic care. It is proactive and holistic, rather than reactive and fragmented.It is designed to help people who have chronic conditions, and those who may be at risk for developing them, through prevention and planning. The Blueprint seeks to achieve its goals by establishing and promoting the following:

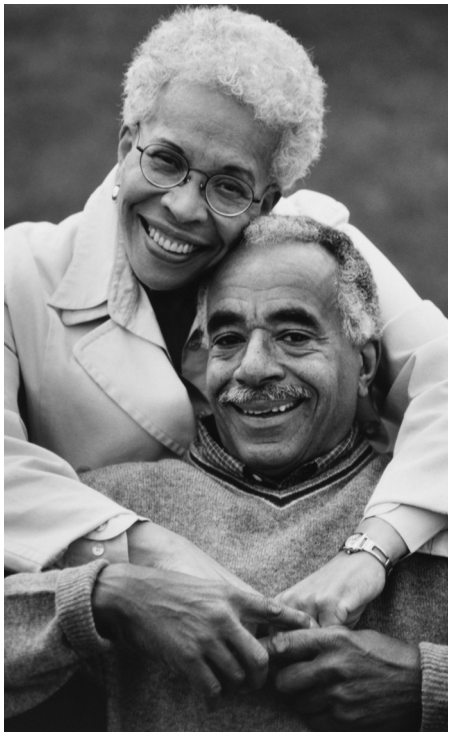
• **Public policies that support healthy lifestyles** and effective health care**.**

• **Effective and accessible community-centered programs and activities** to encourage and maintain healthier lifestyles.

• **Self-management tools for individual participation and empowerment,** through innovative programs such as the Healthier Living Workshop.

• **Improved health care information systems**, including the Blueprint's Chronic Care Information System, to give physicians and other medical professionals the critical information needed to deliver evidence-based care. New information technology can help identify patients that need additional attention or specific interventions.

• **Coordinated approaches by health system organizations** including insurers, state government and non-profit health care organizations. This will result in better support for consumers and providers alike in the areas of patient education, quality standards, disease management, and incentives to deliver better care.



Strategic Plan

As part of Act 191, the Vermont Blueprint for Health delivered its revised Strategic Plan to the General Assembly. The plan is a guide for operational planning and implementation, as well as a reference for evaluation for the Blueprint over the next five years.

Critical to the development of the plan, its implementation targets, and its ongoing assessment has been the participation of the Blueprint executive committee, a variety of stakeholder work groups, and staff in participating communities and in the Department of Health.

Patient Self-Management
In "Healthier Living Workshops" patients with chronic conditions learn tools and techniques to better manage their health.

2006: Achievements

Increased Participation: Blueprint Expands to Six Communities

The Vermont Blueprint for Health first implemented its chronic care model in two hospital service areas: Northeastern Regional Medical Center in St. Johnsbury and Southwestern Medical Center in Bennington. In 2006, four additional hospital service areas were funded: Mt. Ascutney Hospital in Windsor, Springfield Hospital in Springfield, Central Vermont Hospital in Berlin, and Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington.

All six of these communities now have funding for local project managers, self-management regional coordinators, community physical activity initiatives, and additional provider education.

Communities Supporting Health

The Vermont Blueprint for Health encourages communities to become healthier places to live, work, learn and play. Collaboration has helped to better establish consistent program guidelines and coordinated efforts to support physical activity initiatives, and statewide grants have been awarded for this purpose.

In preparation for expanding the Blueprint beyond the six service areas, communities throughout the state have been funded to assess community infrastructure, develop coalitions and walking programs, and engage residents in these activities.

Provider Participation

Nearly 75 percent of all primary care providers in funded communities have signed on to the Blueprint. They have been active participants, learning about innovations and evidence-based standards for the delivery of effective, proactive care for patients with chronic conditions.

Implementation of this effort began with measures to prevent and manage diabetes. Steps to deal with the chronic conditions of hypertension and hyperlipidemia are now in the final stages of adoption. The Provider Practice Workgroup, a statewide coalition of health professionals, is advising the Blueprint on clinical issues such as adoption of best-practices guidelines, monitoring progress, and metrics of success.

Healthier Living Self-Management Programs

Because Vermonters must take a central role in the management of their health, consumer participation is critical for the success of the Blueprint for Health. In 2006, over 300 people completed the "Healthier Living Workshop," an evidence-based program originally developed by Stanford University. This course teaches self-management of chronic conditions through a variety of skill-building techniques. Under the Blueprint, workshop leaders have been trained and workshops conducted in 10 hospital service areas across the state.

Patient Information Systems

The Department of Health, in partnership with Vermont Information Technology Leaders, have contracted with GE Health Care and Orion Systems to develop a new web-based chronic care patient information system. This system will enhance the ability of health care providers to manage chronic illnesses for patients by giving providers the right information at the right time. Mt. Ascutney Hospital in Windsor will be the first participant to install and test this system in 2007.

Health Systems Collaboration

Effective collaboration with public and private insurance carriers, as well as support from private business and other organizations, is essential to the success of the Blueprint. We are working closely with the state Medicaid office to identify and adopt a common set of evidence-based standards in 2007 to support the Medicaid Disease Management program.

Coordinated Public Policy

With passage of Act 191, the Vermont Legislature's support for the Blueprint for Health strengthened existing links between government and private partners.

The State incorporated the priorities of the Blueprint into the selection process when, as an employer, it chose a health insurance benefits provider for state employees.

Under the Blueprint, physicians are collaborating with the Office of Vermont Health Access to adopt common clinical guidelines for both the Blueprint and OVHA's disease management program. With input from insurance partners, we anticipate that these guidelines will be used to establish common measures for standards of clinical practice.

Health Department staff worked with the Agency of Transportation advisory committee to develop a five-year Vermont Pedestrian and Bicycle Policy Plan, and VTrans staff serve on the Fit & Healthy Vermonters advisory committee as well as the Community Workgroup for the Blueprint.

National Recognition

Other states, as well as the federal government, are now looking at what Vermont is achieving in this area. We are sharing our experience and information on best practices with national health policy partners such as Academy Health. The U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality has provided us with expertise on payment mechanisms and on our analysis of consumer and provider surveys. They also helped with sponsorship of a public event bringing national experts and local stakeholders together in Vermont.

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Major Goals for 2007

• Expand the Blueprint for Health into **additional communities** and health service areas throughout the state.

• Expand the Blueprint to include **additional chronic conditions**.

• Implement the **chronic care patient information system** in St. Johnsbury, Bennington, Windsor, Springfield, Central Vermont and Burlington areas.

• **Add chronic disease specialists** to local Health Department district offices to support community-level work with partners and integration with other activities.

• **Expand the availability** of the "Healthier Living Workshops."

• Continue to expand **physical activity initiatives statewide** in coordination with Fit & Healthy Vermonters.

• Increase work with community coalitions to **support disease prevention activities**.

• **Fund community level health and wellness** activities integrated with Coordinated Healthy Activity, Motivation and Prevention Programs (CHAMPPS).

• Develop **new payment recommendations** to reward providers for high quality care and patient wellness.

Sustainability

The Vermont Blueprint for Health is also a blueprint for fiscal responsibility. By improving both consumer self-care and proactive care management, the rapid increase in health care costs can be slowed, resulting in significant savings. Achieving this goal will require a long-term commitment by policymakers to sustain efforts as we move forward, making needed changes to our health systems infrastructure and programs.

Public Private Partnership

A project of the magnitude and complexity of the Vermont Blueprint for Health requires the strong commitment of multiple interest groups and stakeholders if it is to succeed. To lead this effort, we have forged a strong public-private partnership that includes state government, health insurance plans, business and community leaders, health care providers and consumers. The supporting organizational structure includes an Executive Committee working with the Commissioner of Health to advise on the vision and strategic direction, and five statewide workgroups that focus on the planning and evaluation of local implementation efforts.

Blueprint for Health Partners

- AARP – Vermont Chapter
- Bi-State Primary Care Association
- Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Vermont
- CIGNA
- Consumer representatives
- Dartmouth College, School of Medicine
- MVP Health Plan
- Northeast Healthcare Quality Foundation (QIO)
- University of Vermont, College of Medicine:
  - Vermont Child Health Improvement Program
  - Area Health Education Centers
- University of Vermont, College of Nursing and Health Sciences
- Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems
- Vermont Business Roundtable
- Vermont Hospitals
- Vermont Medical Society
- Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care (VPQHC)
- Vermont Assembly of Home Health Agencies
- State of Vermont:
  - Department of Health
  - Department of Aging and Independent Living
  - Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities and Health Care Administration
  - Office of Vermont Health Access (Medicaid)
  - Department of Human Resources

More information about the Vermont Blueprint for Health is available on the Vermont Department of Health website: **http://healthvermont.gov/blueprint.aspx**

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