



## POSITION STATEMENT

### A Transformed Health System for the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Healthy Americans are a valuable natural resource that must be protected and sustained if the United States is to remain competitive and secure. To that end, the United States must become the healthiest nation in a healthier world. We envision a 21<sup>st</sup> Century health system that results in optimal health for all and a longer life span and healthier quality of life for succeeding generations. Such a system prioritizes prevention; supports healthy environments and lifestyles; provides, at a minimum, preventive and primary health care for every person; eliminates inequities in health status; and protects people and communities from existing and emerging health threats.

A transformed U.S. health system must be

- Oriented toward health, rather than sickness, and able to address the known determinants of health – environmental, social, behavioral, and medical.
- Comprehensive and capable of fostering health promotion and disease prevention at all levels, including individual, family, community, and country.
- An amalgamation of the resources and knowledge of public health, health care, and all public and private sector entities that influence health outcomes at the community, state and national level.
- Inclusive of the unique expertise of partners such as education and agricultural systems, as well as those not traditionally associated with health, such as transportation, industry, and energy, to assure that every American is served by a robust public health and health care system.
- Capable of continuously measuring and improving the health of the public, while being fully accountable and transparent.
- Built on key health system capabilities, including a standardized, integrated, individual, and public health information system; a sufficient and appropriate mix of health professionals; and flexible, sustainable financing.

A transformed U.S. health system demands new and different commitments and investments from both government and the private sector. The United States must establish health as the default outcome, rather than obesity and chronic illness. It is imperative we begin now by creating a shared vision and taking steps to generate a United States that is the healthiest nation in a healthier world.

The first steps include:

- Obtaining commitment from policymakers to invest in health prevention and protection as the basis of health system transformation.
- Supporting public health's capacity to accomplish its mission with flexible, sustainable financial resources.
- Obtaining a national commitment to end health disparities.
- Supporting an adequate number, specialty mix, diversity, and distribution of public health and health care workers to reflect the unique needs of diverse American communities, through the development of policies and sustainable financing.



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- Establishing “health in all policies” by evaluating and addressing the health impact of all policies across all governmental agencies and sectors of the economy.
- Designing electronic record exchanges to support the two-way exchange of public health and clinical data and educating the public about the use, value, and purpose of personal and family health records.
- Creating communities that promote health by encouraging collaboration among medical care providers, the public health system, and traditional and nontraditional partners in the public and private sectors.
- Providing incentives to create healthy work environments and communities that maximize opportunities for improved health and minimize environment-related health risks, including communicable diseases, accidents and injuries, exposure to toxic substances, and dangerous consumer products and services.
- Developing policies that promote health and well-being in the built-environment, including childcare centers, schools, workplaces, communities, and homes.
- Developing and implementing policies that make it easier for individuals to decide on healthy choices for nutrition and physical activity where they live, work, and play.
- Fostering a culture of preparedness that includes the system capacity to prevent, mitigate, or recover from threats to the health, safety, and security of our communities.
- Responding to the universal public need and demand for access to comprehensive health care that:
  - Emphasizes prevention and helps people use existing health services and systems effectively.
  - Provides incentives for healthy behavior.
  - Covers all immunizations recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and all clinical preventive services and screenings recommended by the U.S. Preventive Health Services Taskforce.
  - Promotes systems that support chronic disease management and the establishment of “medical homes” that emphasize primary and preventive care.
  - Links the individual and health care provider to resources in the community which support improved quality of life.
  - Ensures quality of care for all consumers regardless of race, ethnicity, income, language ability, education, sexual orientation and age.

### **APPROVAL HISTORY:**

*ASTHO Position Statements relate to specific issues that are time sensitive, narrowly defined, or are a further development or interpretation of ASTHO policy. Statements are developed and reviewed by appropriate Policy Committees and approved by the ASTHO Executive Committee. Position Statements are not voted on by the full ASTHO membership.*

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