

The CDC Preconception Health and Health Care Initiative

Background: The CDC Preconception Health and Health Care Initiative was established in 2004 to coordinate activities preconception care activities at CDC, the Department of Health and Human Services and at other national, state and local organizations in order to develop and implement consensus recommendations. To ensure effective implementation of the recommendations, the Initiative aims to develop tools, and guidelines for practice; improve provider and consumer knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; identify opportunities to integrate Preconception Care programs and policies into federal, state, local health programs, and evaluate existing programs for feasibility and demonstrated effectiveness.

The initiative is guided by a steering committee and develops and promotes the implementation of recommendations, strategies, guidelines and tools through the work of the CDC Workgroup on Preconception Care, the Select Panel, and the various Workgroups. These groups are composed of representatives of partner organizations and subject matter experts.

Accomplishments: In November 2004, a meeting was held in Atlanta, Georgia with representatives of 22 National Partner organizations. They recommended holding a Summit to better understand the current practices in preconception care among clinical care providers and within state and local health departments and in community-based programs. The Summit was held in June 2005, along with the first meeting of the Select Panel on preconception care. Over 400 participants attended the Summit which included presentations from 70 groups. The Select Panel met for two days to develop recommendations for preconception health and health care. Through literature review, presentations at the Summit and deliberations, the Select Panel assessed current scientific knowledge, identified best and promising practices, identified issues needing further attention, refined the definition and developed vision, goals, recommendations, and action steps, and produced documents to share across professional fields. The recommendations were developed and published in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports Recommendations and Reports on April 21, 2006 (Volume 55, Number RR-6). Experts were invited to prepare manuscripts on the various aspects of preconception health and health care, and, in September 2006, a special supplement of the Maternal and Child Health journal was published including 33 articles on preconception care (Volume 10 Number 5 pages S1-S206). In June 2006, clinical, public health and consumer workgroups were convened and developed strategies for implementing the recommendations; in March 2007, a workgroup was convened at George Washington University to develop strategies for implementation in the areas of policy and finance. Members of the clinical, public health and consumer workgroup continue to meet over the phone to implement the recommendations. The Select Panel was convened again in May 2007 to review products of the various workgroups. Planning for the 2nd National Summit started in April 2007.

Some of the ongoing activities of the workgroups include:

- Developing a curriculum for training clinical care providers in preconception care
- Developing a uniform set of clinical care guidelines
- Developing standard assessment tools for providers and consumers
- Developing a clinical demonstration project and other research projects
- Modifying existing surveys to include questions on preconception health and health care
- Evaluating preconception/interconception care activities under Healthy Start
- Implementing the Public Health Practice Collaboratives in three cities
- Conducting participatory action research with women at risk