



# MAINE CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

*Improving the Health of Maine Communities*

Winter 2001 Volume 2, Issue 1

## Community Health Information System Planning Work Group

The Maine Center for Public Health and the Public Health Resource Group have joined forces to bring together interested parties to plan for the development of a web-based information system that includes population-based public health data. The one-year planning effort was funded through a grant from the Bingham Program.

The Work Group's mission is to plan an Internet-based system that will efficiently and effectively provide health information to the staff of public health agencies, community coalitions and health care organizations as well as to individual clinicians, educators, students, policy makers and researchers. The system will build on existing efforts and compile data from various sources, incorporating peer and national benchmarking tools, while safeguarding confidential patient data. The system will then transform the data into health indicators and tools that can strengthen decision-making and enhance planning, monitoring and evaluation efforts.

The Work Group has met several times to review current systems and determine methods for obtaining user information. A data users survey is being sent to a variety of agencies, organizations and coalitions with an interest in obtaining public health data for planning and evaluation purposes. The survey will identify the types of data needed, what the data is used for and barriers to collecting data. The results of the survey will guide the work group in the development of an appropriate, useful and user-friendly system.

Once the plan is complete the group will make recommendations for implementation and will identify potential funding sources, if needed.

Members of the Work Group include representatives from state and local public health agencies, hospitals, voluntary health agencies, data/information organizations, the funding organization and insurers.



### COMMUNITY HEALTH INFORMATION WORK GROUP MEMBERS

Norman Anderson, American Lung Association of Maine  
N. Warren Bartlett, Maine Bureau of Health  
Paul Campbell, Maine Center for Public Health  
Alice Chapin, Maine Health Information Center  
Ron Deprez, Public Health Resource Group  
Diana Friou, Portland Public Health Division  
Paul Kuehnert, Maine Bureau of Health  
Lisa Miller, The Bingham Program  
Natalie Morse, MaineGeneral Hospital/ Maine Network of Healthy Communities  
Karen O'Rourke, Maine Center for Public Health  
Bill Perry, Cigna Healthcare  
Alan Prysunka, Maine Health Data Organization  
N. Burgess Record, Western Maine Center for Heart Health  
Nancy Sonnenfeld, Maine Bureau of Health/University of New England  
Meredith Tipton, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield

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# Maine Turning Point Project Develops Strategic Objectives

The Maine Center for Public Health Board of Directors has approved a list of strategic objectives that outline the findings and recommendations developed by Maine Turning Point Work Groups. These objectives include:

1. Strengthen the process of developing and monitoring public health goals in Maine, especially at the local level;
2. Establish and/or strengthen community coalitions in all Health Districts in Maine to form Health District Councils to perform essential public health services;
3. Increase the financing and provision of activities across all three levels of prevention, provided by Maine's health care professionals and institutions;
4. Strengthen Maine's public health workforce through education and training programs;
5. Develop a health information system that facilitates community-level planning, monitoring, evaluation and education throughout Maine; and,
6. Enhance coordination and collaboration among state agencies and non-governmental organizations committed to public health goals in Maine.

Over the last eighteen months Maine Turning Point pulled together more than 175 "Partners" to evaluate the status of Maine's public health system and make recommendations on infrastructure improvement, workforce and training, public health in the context of clinical care, data availability, and state-local relationships. All the MTP Partners, as well as many additional individuals and organizations will have to work hard, long and together

to assure that the report recommendations become reality. For additional details about the developing Public Health Improvement Plan and key recommendations, go to our website at [www.mcph.org](http://www.mcph.org) and link to "Reports."

With the MCPH Board's approval in hand, the Maine Turning Point project now turns to writing a Public Health Improvement Plan for Maine. This winter the draft plan will be presented to a range of organizations for feedback. The final report will be published by summer. This report raises a question that we must each address, both for ourselves individually and our organizations: What will I/we do to help make the public health system in Maine stronger? 

M A I N E



*Turning Point*

*New Directions in Public Health*


## Turning Point Implementation Proposal

The Center submitted a proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Foundation in January 2001 to fund several aspects of the Turning Point Health Improvement Plan. Because RWJ funding is not sufficient to address all of the priority issues from the Health Improvement Plan, additional funding will be sought from private foundations. The following are the essential components of implementation included in the proposal:

**1. Formation and ongoing functioning of a Turning Point Monitoring Committee.** This body is to be drawn from members of the existing statewide partnership, and most importantly, from those organizations that are assuming key roles related to Turning Point objectives and strategies. The purpose of this committee is to monitor the implementation of the strategies outlined in the plan and to initiate action whenever warranted to assure its complete implementation.

**2. Increase local public health capacity by developing the skills and ability of community leaders to carry out the essential public health functions.** A plan for training and education will be developed and based, to a large degree, upon the survey of training needs completed during the Turning Point planning phase. The plan is expected to include at least peer education or mentoring and a rigorous educational program in core public health.

**3. Strengthen public health constituency at the local level.** This proposal will seek funding to help strengthen two important advocacy groups – the Maine Network of Healthy Communities as it develops statewide and the Maine Public Health Association that has played an important role in public health advocacy for many years.

In all aspects of implementation, partners in each of the three areas will be sought to avoid duplication and provide maximum synergy among organizations. Funding is expected to begin in June 2001. 

## New MCPH Programs

The Maine Center for Public Health is pleased to participate in two new programs:

### *Evaluation of CVD Prevention Program*

MCPH will be working with the Bureau of Health, the Maine Cardiovascular Health Council and other state and local partners to conduct the evaluation of the new comprehensive cardiovascular disease prevention program recently funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As part of the project, MCPH will be developing an evaluation plan, writing and disseminating reports, evaluating partnerships, providing technical assistance and training on evaluation, among other activities.

We are delighted that Michele Polecsek, Ph.D. has joined the staff part-time to work on this project. We are also in the process of hiring a full time evaluator.

### *Bringing Prevention Research to Maine*

Maine will have the opportunity to develop applied public health research projects through a joint effort of the Maine Center for Public Health, Maine Bureau of Health, the Harvard Prevention Research Center (PRC) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

CDC has funded 23 Prevention Research Centers across the country at Schools of Public Health. The goal of prevention research is to discover innovative ways to promote and maintain health and quality of life and to translate these discoveries into improved policies and public health practice. This will be the first time that a Prevention Research Center has crossed state borders to develop research projects.

While each PRC has a somewhat different focus, the mission of the Harvard PRC is to design, implement, and evaluate programs that improve physical activity and diet and decrease inactivity among children and youth. Dheeraj Bansal, M.D., has been hired by Harvard PRC as a Scientific Director who will be based in Maine.



A Steering Committee for the project is being formed. This committee will develop the direction for the project and provide linkages to state and local partners.

For more information on Prevention Research Centers, visit the CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/prc/glance.htm>.

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**Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity accounts for an estimated 300,000 deaths each year nationally, which results in an estimated four deaths per day in Maine.**

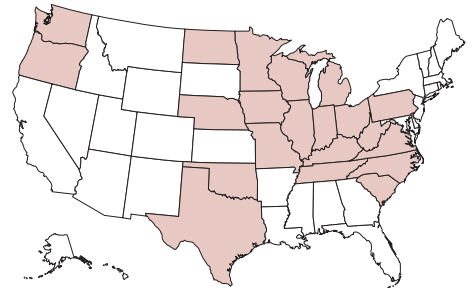
(Source: Maine Bureau of Health)

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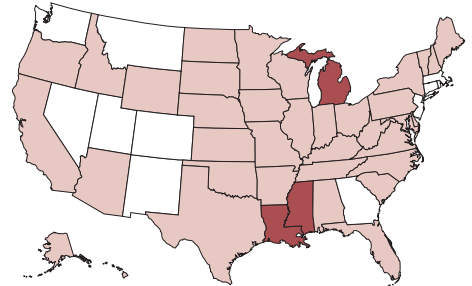
## Prevalence of Overweight Among U.S. Adults, BRFSS



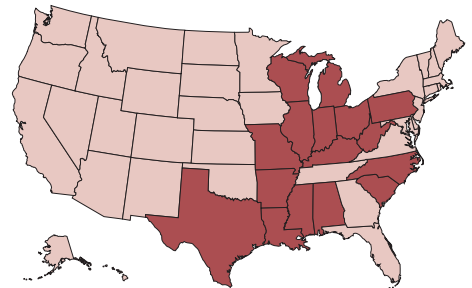
1989



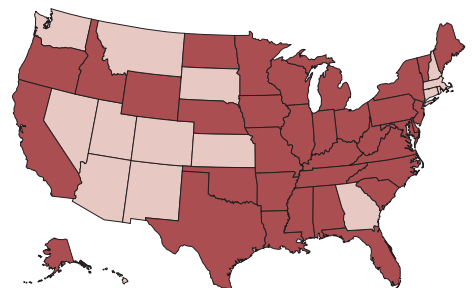
1991



1994



1997



## New Web Site Launched

Celebrate the new year by visiting the new Public Health in Maine web site at [www.mcph.org](http://www.mcph.org). This is a new incarnation of the eight-month old MCPH web site and is the result of re-engineering that began with discussions at a MCPH Board meeting last summer.

We believe that the new site contains improvements for our statewide public health system, as well as for the principle organizational partners, the Maine Center for Public Health and the Maine Public Health Association (MPHA). We are interested in your feedback in our continued desire to improve communications.



[www.mcph.org](http://www.mcph.org)

## Posting Your Public Health Event

The Maine Center for Public Health would like to invite you to post your public health trainings, conferences and other events on this site.

We want to be a resource for all kinds of public health activities, such as those sponsored by your organization. We hope that individuals interested in public health activities across the state will use the website to find out what trainings or conferences might be available.

In order to post your event/training/conference, all you need to do is follow the simple instructions below. We'll take care of the rest! It's easy and it's free! So please send your announcements now and we'll be sure to get them up in no time.

### HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR EVENT(S)

1. Send by email to [phealth@mcph.org](mailto:phealth@mcph.org)
2. Enter the subject: "MCPH Site Event Item" in the subject line of the email
3. Include the following information:
  - Title of Event
  - Date & Time
  - Location
  - Description of Event
  - Contact Information
  - Expiration Date



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