Approach to Developing Healthy People 2020 Topic Areas
Recommendations of the Secretary's Advisory Committee

SECTION I. CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020 TOPIC AREAS

Purpose of Topic Areas	
Issue:	Past versions of Healthy People were primarily released in a printed, static format that could best be navigated through the use of easily recognizable chapter headings. These headings were called "priority areas" in the 1990 health objectives and Healthy People 2000, and "focus areas" in Healthy People 2010. In the first phase of its work, the Committee indicated that a web-accessible database would enable users to locate the information they seek through a web-interface. Members believed that this capacity would make it unnecessary to assign objectives to specific focus/topic areas. The Committee was concerned that creating topic area categories would imply more than was intended about the importance of one area relative to other areas; it recommended that priorities be set with a separate process.
Approach:	In the second phase of its work, discussions have led the Committee to conclude that Topic Areas have served important functions, apart from their earlier role as "chapter headings." They not only *organize* objectives, but enable federal *management* of those objectives, and facilitate *communication* about the objectives. The Committee therefore recommends that Topic Areas be included in Healthy People 2020.
Need to Define the Term, "Topic Area"	
Issue:	Terminology for elements of the Healthy People framework was not defined in the past. To-date, two different terms have been used to refer to the categories that organize Healthy People objectives: "priority areas," (1990 health objectives, Healthy People 2000) and "focus areas" (Healthy People 2010). The term "topic areas" has been proposed for Healthy People 2020in order to be neutral with respect to priorities or focus.
Approach:	It is important to provide clear explanations of what Healthy People 2020 topic areas are, how they are meant to be used, and how they relate to parallel categories from the past. Clearly defining the meaning of the term topic area, and the function that topic areas will serve is a first step to ensure the systematic development of Healthy People 2020 topic areas. Without this clear understanding, topic areas may evolve in an ad-hoc fashion. Topic areas, by definition, cannot be viewed as mutually exclusive. Taken together and viewed from a population health perspective, they are inter-related. There need not be a one-to-one correspondence between topic area categories and the work groups of federal staff who are assembled to manage the objectives within those categories. To permit meaningful topic area categories that enable users to quickly identify the content they are seeking, more topic area categories may be needed than have been used in the past. Yet multiple topic area categories could be assigned to federal working groups for management purposes.

The Content of Each Topic Area	
Issue:	The printed chapters for each focus area of Healthy People 2010 and earlier iterations followed a consistent format (e.g.., a goal, overview, summary of interim progress toward the previous decade's objectives, summary of the current decade's objectives, summary of related objectives from other focus areas, terminology, and references.) This approach made the Healthy People document easy to read, but it was structured to reflect a "siloed" approach to developing and managing objective sets. Although the content of some objective sets overlapped, cross-cutting collaboration to address risk factors and determinants of health and disease was not encouraged in this approach.
Approach:	Each Topic Area in Healthy People 2020 should continue to follow a consistent format, with an introduction and overview. However, a key part of that overview should show how topics relate to other topics. The intent should be to help draw the connections, rather than to create the illusion of "silos." Topic Areas selection criteria should be specified, to ensure that the Topic Areas are aligned with the overall framework of Healthy People.
	In its Phase I report, the Committee suggested that a dual focus on determinants/ risk factors and disease-specific categories would deepen users' awareness of health determinants, and encourage collaboration and multi-level interventions. Building on this idea, the Committee recommends using logic models to show how objectives within each topic area relate to each other. Also, while the assignment of objectives to a topic area has operational value, the schema for linking objectives within a topic area should include explicit examples of cross referencing to other topic areas to avoid implying that topic areas are mutually exclusive.
How Topic Areas Relate to the Framework	
Issue:	The HP 2020 "framework" includes many different elements: the mission, overarching goals, action model, topic areas, objectives, targets, criteria for prioritization, and evidence-based guidelines for implementation. For stakeholders involved in developing Healthy People, additional elements used to shape the initiative include criteria for objectives, target-setting methodologies, and (potentially) criteria for topic areas.
Approach:	The Committee has called Healthy People "a national health agenda that communicates a vision and a strategy for the Nation." The topic areas must support efforts to *communicate a vision* for Healthy People, rather than obscuring that vision beneath layers of complexity. To accomplish this end, it is important that elements of the framework fit together as a coherent, consistent whole. If the overarching goals of Healthy People tell the story of "where we want to go as a nation," the topic areas and objectives should offer guidance for "how we will get there."

Definitions and Assumptions

Topic Areas are points of entry for each interested user group into the Healthy People framework; they are broad categories that organize the Healthy People 2020 *objectives*. Healthy People 2020 Topic Areas are synonymous with the "Focus Areas" of Healthy People 2010, and the "Priority Areas" of Healthy People 2000 and the 1990 Health Objectives. They serve three main functions:

1. Organizational: Topic areas identify and group objectives of related content. A single topic highlights like or closely related subjects. Topic areas are not mutually exclusive.

2. Managerial: Each topic area is assigned to a federal "lead agency" that coordinates with other agencies to develop objectives for that topic. Lead agencies are responsible for tracking, monitoring, and periodically reporting on objectives within their assigned topic area. Multiple topic areas, with objectives of like content, may be assigned to a single working group of federal staff for management purposes.

3. Communication: Topic areas can be organized in a user-friendly way to further enable users to locate the content they are seeking. (Although objectives within a topic areas are assigned to a single federal agency for managerial purposes, for communication purposes objectives may be included in multiple topic areas.)

Objectives are national, specific, measurable, and realistic statements of intended outcomes over a stated period of time (by the year 2020).

How the Topic Areas should Relate to the Framework

Healthy People 2020 categories should not be developed in an ad hoc manner, but should be consistent with and relate to the Action Model for Achieving Healthy People 2020 Goals (below).

Figure 1. Action Model to Achieve Healthy People 2020 Goals

The three broad categories of this model could serve as entry points to the Healthy People 2020 Web-accessible database: 1) interventions, 2) determinants, and 3) outcomes. Healthy People users at various levels (i.e., national, state, and local) would be able to enter through these categories to begin the process of locating the content they are seeking within Healthy People (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1.   **Entry Points for Organizing Healthy People 2020 Objectives**

User Levels	Categories for Sorting Objectives by User Priorities		
National			
State	Interventions	Determinants	Outcomes
Local			

Once they have entered one of the three broad categories, the topic areas would appear. **The specific topics would remain the same**, **regardless of which category the user selects**. Each topic area would have a logic model that shows how objectives within that topic relate to each other. A conceptual model will be used to show how objectives across topic areas relate to each other. The topic area logic models would also tie the objectives to evidence-based actions. **The user's choice of entry category would determine the point in the topic area logic model that will come up** when the user selects that topic. For example, a user who enters "interventions" and then selects "Cancer" might obtain a collection of objectives that includes (Healthy People 2010) objective 3-10:

- "Increase the proportion of physicians and dentists who counsel their at-risk patients about tobacco use cessation, physical activity, and cancer screening:"

On the other hand, a user who enters through "Outcomes" and then selects cancer might be provided a collection of objectives that includes (Healthy People 2010) objective 3-3:

- "Reduce the breast cancer death rate."

A user who enters through "Determinants" and chooses cancer might receive a collection of objectives that includes (Healthy People 2010) objective 19-6:

- "Increase the proportion of persons aged 2 years and older who consume at least three servings of vegetables, with at least one-third being dark green or orange vegetables."
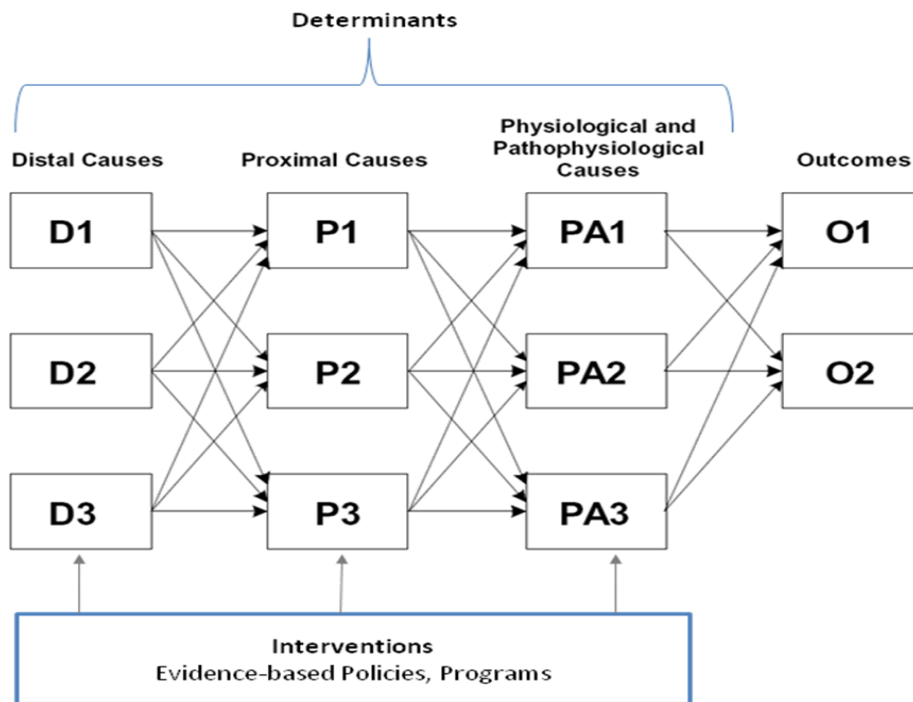
Or it could include (Healthy People 2010) objective 8-24:

- "Reduce exposure of the population to pesticides, heavy metals, and other toxic chemicals, as measured by bold and urine concentrations of the substances and their metabolites."

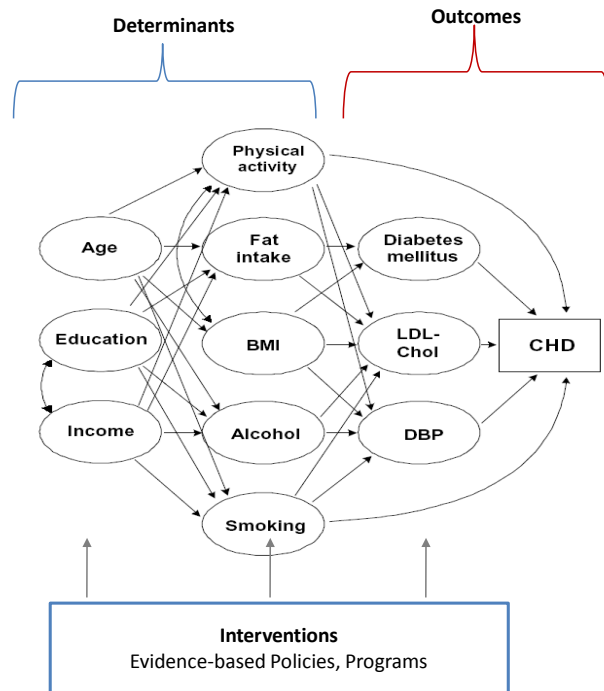**How Topic Areas Fit into a Relational Data Model**

A relational data model will be critical for configuring the Healthy People 2020 database to yield effective results when queried by users. The Committee has previously proposed that a conceptual model should be used to structure queries. In its report on System Requirements for Healthy People 2020, the Committee suggested that a model of proximal and distal causes of particular health outcomes, defined by Christopher Murray, et al. (2003),[i] could be adapted to help organize information within the Healthy People 2020 online database. Figure 2, below, illustrates how this model could correspond to the three broad categories of the Healthy People 2020 Action Model (Interventions, Determinants, and Outcomes).

Exhibit 2. Potential Model for Organizing Information within Healthy People 2020

As noted earlier in this document, federal lead agencies are responsible for guiding the process of developing objectives for their assigned topic areas. Federal staff members who are preparing objectives for their assigned Healthy People 2020 Topic Areas should "tag" each objective with appropriate labels to indicate how the objective should be categorized within the health topics of interest. The labels should indicate where each objective falls within the logic model for that topic area, and how it relates to other objectives across different health topics. When tagged appropriately, the linkages and overlaps among objectives will define the web of relationships for any health topic. Below, a second adaptation from Murray, et al is provided to illustrate linkages for risk factors/determinants, interventions, and outcomes related to chronic heart disease (CHD).

Exhibit 3. Web of Risk Factors/Determinants, Interventions, and Outcomes, CHD

Using Tags to Position the Objectives within Topic Areas

Each broad category of the Healthy People 2020 Action model includes elements that address the range of relevant factors for that area. These elements (as seen in Figure 1) are listed below:

- **Interventions**: programs; policies; information.

- **Determinants**: social factors; economic factors; environmental factors; innate individual traits.

- **Outcomes:** behavioral outcomes; specific risk factors; diseases, mental disorders, disability, and injury; and quality of life.

The elements that fall under the broad categories of Interventions, Determinants and Outcomes could be used as tags for the objectives, together with a notation that describes the objective's position within the logic model. For example, within (Healthy People 2010) Focus Area category of "Tobacco Use," Objective 27-14 is, **"Reduce the illegal sales rate to minors through enforcement of laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors."** This intervention (policy) is intended to affect the social environment by increasing the barriers for young people to obtain tobacco. Thus, the objective could be tagged as "**policy, social factors**." Because social factors are a "distal cause" of the behavioral outcome of smoking, the objective would be positioned at the far left of the logic model.

Criteria to Refine the List of Topic Area Categories

HHS will make a management decision about whether it will be more effective to:

1) Develop a list of Healthy People 2020 Topic Area categories first, and then develop groupings of objectives within them, or

2) Develop the Healthy People 2020 objectives first, and then go back to refine the list of Topic Area categories that will be used to group them.

In either case, the following criteria may be used to refine the final list of Topic Area categories for Healthy People 2020.

- The Topic Area is an organizing principle (i.e., groups of related objectives could be organized within that category)

- Federal leadership has been identified for the Topic Area, with expertise to adequately monitor and address the issue over the course of the decade;

- The Topic Area allows sufficient focus and action (e.g., a minimum number of objectives to ensure focus and a manageable number of objectives to facilitate action).

The Committee has provided a proposed list of Topic Areas for Healthy People 2020 in Appendix A.

Standards for the Content of Topic Areas

Once objectives have been drafted within Topic Areas, the following standards can be applied to ensure the appropriate **content of Topic Areas** (i.e., appropriate groupings of sets of objectives.)

- A conceptual model to clarify pathways of intervention (i.e., how objectives relate to one another)

- Coherence of content; clarity of emphasis within and differences among topic area.

- Each topic area should:

  - Reflect a body of available literature that can be accessed to promote health and prevent disease or injury;

  - Reflect our understanding of the pathophysiology and multiple underlying determinants of health;

  - Relate to a schema or conceptual model that links back to the HP2020 framework;

  - Specific groups with complementary expertise to adequately address the issue should be accountable ;

  - Sufficient focus to allow feasibility and accountability (e.g., a manageable number of objectives).

Issues to be Addressed in the Introductory Material for Each Topic Area

The concepts of health equity, a life stages approach, and an ecological approach to health promotion are central to Healthy People 2020. To highlight these issues without adding an unnecessary element of complexity to the presentation of objectives within Healthy People, the introductory material for each Topic Area must highlight key issues for consideration and intervention related to these three concepts.

For example, a topic area focused on HIV/ AIDS could highlight barriers to health equity in screening and treatment for HIV/AIDS; highlight issues of particular importance across the lifestages (e.g., effective screening and treatment of pregnant women for HIV; neonatal care for HIV-infected infants; pediatric issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS treatment; prevention, education, and screening issues for adolescents; etc.) For each topic area, relevant elements of the social and physical environment (e.g., the sale of illicit drugs in the community; inadequate availability, affordability, and usage of condoms; the presence of abandoned buildings and that can be used as "shooting galleries," regulatory barriers against needle exchange, etc.) should be presented, along with guidance for how to identify effective interventions.

Appendix 1

Healthy People 2010 Focus Areas and
Proposed List of Topic Areas for Healthy People 2020

Healthy People 2010 Focus Areas[1]	Proposed Healthy People 2020 Topic Areas[2]	Comments
1. Access to Quality Health Services	1. Access to Health Care	
2. Arthritis, Osteoporosis and Chronic Back Conditions	2. High Quality Health Care	
3. Cancer	3. Arthritis, Osteoporosis and Chronic Back Conditions	
4. Chronic Kidney Disease	4. Cancer	
5. Diabetes	5. Chronic Kidney Disease	
6. Disability and Secondary Conditions	6. Diabetes	
7. Educational and Community-Based Programs	7. Disability and Secondary Conditions	
8. Environmental Health	8. Health Promotion	HP2010 focus area 7 was disliked, but recommendations for how to fix it were inconsistent. In a separate section, one person suggested adding the topic area of "Health Promotion," which has been added here.
9. Family Planning	9. Built Environment	
10. Food Safety	10. Natural Environment	
11. Health Communication	11. Reproductive Health	
12. Heart Disease and Stroke	12. Food Safety and foodborne illness	
13. HIV	13. Health Communication	
14. Immunizations and Infectious Diseases	14. Health IT	
15. Injury and Violence Prevention	15. Heart Disease and Stroke	
16. Maternal, Infant, and Child Health	16. HIV	
17. Medical Product Safety	17. Immunizations	
18. Mental Health and Mental Disorders	18. Communicable Diseases	
19. Nutrition and Overweight	19. Unintentional Injury	
20. Occupational Safety and Health	20. Violence	
21. Oral Health	21. Depression & Suicide	
22. Physical Activity and Fitness	22. Prenatal	22-27. There was a recommendation to combine these under "life course" to avoid fragmentation.
23. Public Health Infrastructure	23. Preschool	
24. Respiratory Diseases	24. Primary School	
25. Sexually Transmitted Diseases	25. Adolescent Health	
	26. Adult	
	27. Healthy Aging	
	28. Medical Product Safety	
	29. Mental Health and Mental Disorders	
	30. Nutrition and Overweight	

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[1] Healthy People 2010 Fact Sheet. Accessible online at: online at: http://www.healthypeople.gov/About/hpfact.htm

[2] Topic Areas that have been changed from the 2010 categories are in red font.
Topic Areas that have been proposed as new additions for Healthy People 2020 have been highlighted in yellow.

Appendix 1

Healthy People 2010 Focus Areas and
Proposed List of Topic Areas for Healthy People 2020

26. Substance Abuse 27. Tobacco Use 28. Vision and Hearing	31. Occupational Safety and Health 32. Oral Health 33. Physical Activity and Fitness 34. Public Health Infrastructure 35. Respiratory Diseases 36. Sexually Transmitted Diseases 37. Substance Abuse 38. Tobacco Use 39. Vision 40. Hearing 41. Emergency Preparedness 42. Health Equity/Disparities 43. Quality of Life 44. Global Health 45. Blood Diseases 46. Digestive Diseases 47. Social and Economic Environments	

Appendix 2

Proposed Organization of Topic Areas for Healthy People 2020

Organizing Categories for Proposed Healthy People 2020 Topic Areas	Proposed Healthy People 2020 Topic Areas[3]
Interventions (14 topic areas) Programs; Policies; Information.	1. Emergency Preparedness 2. Food Safety and foodborne illness 3. Health Communication 4. Health IT 5. Health Promotion 6. High Quality Health Care 7. Immunizations 8. Medical Product Safety 9. Nutrition 10. Occupational Safety and Health 11. Oral Health 12. Physical Activity and Fitness 13. Public Health Infrastructure

Determinants (5- 10 topic areas)
 	
Social factors;
Economic factors;
Environmental factors;
Innate individual traits.
	1. Access to Health Care
	2. Built Environment
	3. Natural Environment
	4. Lifestages
	   • Prenatal
	   • Preschool
	   • Primary School
	   • Adolescent Health
	   • Adult
	   • Healthy Aging
	5. Health Equity/Disparities
	6. Social and Economic Environments

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[3] Topic Areas that have been changed from the 2010 categories are in red font.
Topic Areas that have been proposed as new additions for Healthy People 2020 have been highlighted in yellow.

Appendix 2

Proposed Organization of Topic Areas for Healthy People 2020

Outcomes (24 topic areas)	
Behavioral outcomes; Specific risk factors; Diseases, mental disorders, disability, and injury; Quality of life.	1. Arthritis, Osteoporosis and Chronic Back Conditions 2. Blood Diseases 3. Cancer 4. Chronic Kidney Disease 5. Communicable Diseases 6. Depression & Suicide 7. Diabetes 8. Digestive Diseases 9. Disability and Secondary Conditions 10. Global Health 11. Hearing 12. Heart Disease and Stroke 13. HIV 14. Mental Health and Mental Disorders 15. Overweight 16. Quality of Life 17. Reproductive Health 18. Respiratory Diseases 19. Sexually Transmitted Diseases 20. Substance Abuse 21. Tobacco Use 22. Unintentional Injury 23. Violence 24. Vision

References

[i] Christopher JL Murray, Majid Ezzati, Alan D Lopez, Anthony Rodgers and Stephen Vander Hoorn. Comparative quantification of health risks: Conceptual framework and methodological issues. *Population Health Metrics* 2003, **1**:1. Accessible online at: http://www.pophealthmetrics.com/content/1/1/1