



HEALTH CARE REFORM

Disease Prevention, Health Promotion, and Wellness

Disease prevention, health promotion, and wellness efforts can significantly assist those at risk of or currently experiencing health problems. A variety of biological, psychological, sociocultural, and environmental processes mediate health status. Therefore, psychological and behavioral factors in health promotion and disease prevention are essential to preventing disease, maintaining functional capacity, promoting adherence to treatment, and supporting healthy lifestyles. As experts in human behavior, psychologists work independently and as members of interdisciplinary teams to prevent disease and promote the health and wellness of individuals across the lifespan. Psychologists identify practices that contribute to disease as well as those behaviors that enhance healthy behaviors and lifestyles.

Psychology has been at the forefront of developing effective health promotion and chronic disease management initiatives focused on a variety of important public health issues, including mental and behavioral health problems (e.g., depression), cancer, HIV/AIDS, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, alcohol and substance use, intentional and unintentional injury, public health emergencies, and physical activity and nutrition. Such disease prevention and health promotion activities are provided by psychologists at the interpersonal/familial, community, organizational, and societal levels. Psychologists also play an important role in training other health professionals to identify and refer those who may benefit from psychological and behavioral health promotion and disease prevention initiatives.

APA RECOMMENDATION: Ensure access to quality mental and behavioral health promotion, screening and referral, prevention, early intervention, and wellness services for persons across the lifespan.

Specifically, attention should be directed to:

- Support initiatives that reduce behaviors associated with disease, injury and disability, including tobacco use, interpersonal violence, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and unsafe sex.
- Ensure that quality disease prevention, early intervention, and referral services are available to effectively address the mental and behavioral health consequences of public health emergencies.

- Increase access to appropriate mental and behavioral health services in conjunction with significant medical decision making (e.g., capacity assessment) and procedures (e.g., transplants, bariatric surgery) to promote adherence and healthy outcomes.
- Support health education and communications initiatives based on psychological and behavioral research to prevent disease and promote health and wellness.
- Support initiatives to increase public awareness of and reduce stigma and discrimination regarding mental and behavioral health problems.
- Support initiatives to disseminate evidence-based prevention and early intervention services focused on mental and behavioral health for individuals across the lifespan.
- Ensure support for quality mental and behavioral health prevention and early intervention efforts focused on intentional and unintentional injury.
- Ensure access to appropriate mental and behavioral health screening, referral, and early intervention services in a variety of settings, including health care, education, workplace, residential and long-term care, juvenile justice, jails and prisons, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities.