

SHIP and Health Care Systems

Working to reduce chronic disease in Minnesota

In order to improve the health of Minnesotans and reduce health care costs, it is critical that Minnesota's health care systems make reducing obesity and tobacco use a top priority.

The Role of Health Care in the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)

Health care institutions are key to the success of health improvement in Minnesota. It is essential that health care providers employ creative, multi-disciplinary and culturally sensitive approaches to the prevention of obesity and tobacco use and exposure.

In SHIP "health care" includes any provider of health services or health information:

- Hospitals
- Clinics
- WIC offices
- Local public health
- Migrant health services
- Community health worker service agencies
- Student health services

Health care includes, but is not limited to preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, rehabilitative, maintenance, mental health, palliative care and sale or dispensing of a drug, device, equipment or other item in accordance with a prescription.

The health care system is a unique setting where people discuss their health with medical providers. Health care providers can promote the development and maintenance of healthy lifestyle behaviors by encouraging individuals

to maintain healthy eating habits, participate in physical activity on a regular basis, avoid the use of tobacco products and limit exposure to secondhand smoke.

Health care professionals can also advocate for change in their communities and enhance government, media and industry efforts.

The Current Situation

Changes in health care and the health care setting have created challenges to the approach of supporting wellness and not just treating illness. For example, direct-to-consumer marketing may lead some consumers to believe that rather than changing their lifestyles there is an easy pharmaceutical answer to many conditions. Providers frequently have little time to spend with patients and are often not equipped to offer resources that could help their patients quit smoking, lead more active lives and eat more healthfully.

Health Care Strategies

- Advocate for and incorporate prevention and treatment of obesity in the health care system.
- Establish the Body Mass Index as a vital sign.
- Support data collection systems in the clinical setting to monitor patients and track trends in obesity.
- Encourage health care providers to address healthy weight behaviors and smoking with patients.
- Promote and provide support for breastfeeding.

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Examples of SHIP Interventions for Health Care Settings

For health care provider staff:

- Implement tobacco-free grounds policies for hospitals and other health care facilities.
- Implement comprehensive cessation benefits as part of benefits packages for employees.

For their patients:

- Implement maternity care practices that provide prenatal, birth and postpartum services. For example, develop a written policy on breastfeeding, provide education and training, encourage early breastfeeding initiation, support cue-based feeding, restrict supplements and pacifiers for breastfed infants, and provide for post-discharge follow-up.
- Support implementation of the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement Guidelines for “Prevention and Management of Obesity” and “Primary Prevention of Chronic Disease Risk Factors” by health care providers for adults and children where applicable.
- Build partnerships to facilitate active referral of patients to local resources that increase access to high-quality nutritious foods, opportunities for physical activity and cessation of tobacco use.
- Implement support strategies to motivate and aid patients in making daily decisions to improve their behaviors relating to eating, physical activity and abstinence from tobacco use.
- Implement tobacco-free grounds policies for hospitals and other health care facilities.
- Implement mechanisms that connect people with existing effective cessation services.