

The 2014-2020 North Carolina Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan

Cancer has been the leading cause of death in North Carolina since 2009. It has a big psychological, physical and emotional impact on North Carolinians. According to North Carolina's Central Cancer Registry, in 2011, approximately 140 people are newly diagnosed with cancer every day in North Carolina. Another 50 people lose their lives to this disease. In order to address this issue and decrease the burden of cancer in North Carolina, the Cancer Prevention and Control Branch at the Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of individuals, completed *A Call to Action: North Carolina Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan* in 2014. The group included representatives of the North Carolina Advisory Committee on Cancer Coordination and Control (a legislatively mandated committee), North Carolina Cancer Coalition, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina Division of Public Health, North Carolina Cancer Prevention and Control Branch, and many others interested in reducing the cancer burden in North Carolina.

The Plan is a statewide blueprint for cancer prevention and control work. The overarching purpose is to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with cancer in North Carolina. It focuses on six specific cancers: breast, cervical, colorectal, lung, prostate and skin. In order to meet these goals, the Plan describes ways to prevent new cancers, detect cancer at its earliest stages, treat all patients with the most appropriate therapy(ies), enhance quality of life for those affected by cancer, and reduce cancer-related disparities. It also describes evaluation strategies to measure progress towards meeting these goals.

- **Prevention:** The Plan focuses on behaviors, policies and environmental changes that can reduce cancer risk. It provides guidance on ways to lower these risks by adopting healthy behaviors and promoting environmental changes. Recommendations are for both individuals and organizations/systems.
- **Early Detection:** The focus here is on promoting and delivering cancer screenings based on the latest national recommendations. An emphasis is on reaching people most at risk and those with limited access to screenings. The Plan contains ways to address disparities in cancer among populations experiencing a disproportionate burden of disease, disability and death.
- **Care and Treatment:** The Plan provides guidance on ways to improve access to care, enhance care coordination and assure quality treatment for all cancer patients and their families. It describes professional and public education strategies that will provide information on patient navigation systems, cancer clinical trials, and appropriate services for palliation and survivorship services.

Efforts to reduce the cancer burden in North Carolina will require a coordinated and collective effort of communities, public and private organizations, and individuals. Everyone has a part in the fight against cancer. The Plan:

- Describes ways that individuals, community organizations, healthcare professionals, and policy makers can help prevent, detect and treat cancer.
- Suggests ways to advocate for policy changes that reduce the risks for cancer and promote good care for those with the disease.
- Addresses barriers to prevention and care by outlining a plan of action for cancer programs, community organizations, policy makers, and individual North Carolinians.
- Is being implemented by a diverse coalition of North Carolina cancer programs, organizations and individuals in order to assure North Carolinians timely and equitable access to healthcare throughout the cancer care continuum.

On November 7, 2014, the Advisory Committee on Cancer Coordination and Control, statewide community partners and the Cancer Prevention and Control Branch staff met to begin execution of the Cancer Plan strategies. Specific actions were selected for prevention, early detection, care and treatment, and policy efforts in 2015, which include:

- Educate and encourage family, friends, coworkers, patients, and students about the need to adopt healthy behaviors. Healthy behaviors include: stop smoking or never start; avoid secondhand smoke; eat more vegetables and fruits; maintain a healthy weight; be physically active; reduce stress; and avoid alcohol or use in moderation.
- Build support for the adoption of a comprehensive smoke-free law that protects all workers from exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Promote smoke-free and tobacco-free local regulations.
- Support the development and enforcement of state and local policies to prevent and minimize tobacco use, eliminate secondhand smoke, and promote quitting.
- Support and promote education and policy approaches in homes, schools, day cares, worksites, and community settings that can reduce occupational and environmental exposures to carcinogens.
- Partner with public and private health care providers and community leaders to increase cancer awareness, improve opportunities for cancer screening with emphasis on people with high risks of developing cancer, and improve opportunities for cancer screening with emphasis on people with limited access to screenings.
- Promote adherence to national guidelines on cancer diagnosis and treatment and to Commission on Cancer quality guidelines for accreditation.
- Promote and enhance a statewide patient navigation model with increased training and networking of patient navigators.
- Educate policy makers about the need for increased funding for programs, coalitions and action groups that address or reduce the risk factors of cancer.
- Sponsor or support legislation that promotes and/or funds cancer prevention, screening and control.

To obtain a copy of the Cancer Control Plan and learn more about the work of Cancer Prevention and Control Branch, please visit our website at

<http://publichealth.nc.gov/chronicdiseaseandinjury/cancerpreventionandcontrol/index.htm>.