

Accountable Communities for Health: A Regional Approach to Integrating Community-Wide Prevention Strategies

What is an ACH?

An Accountable Community for Health (ACH) is a structured, cross-sectoral alliance of healthcare, public health, and other organizations that plans and implements strategies to improve population health and health equity for all residents in a geographic area. Designed to strategically leverage resources across sectors, the ACH model presents tremendous opportunities to reduce costs, enhance quality of care, and improve population health.

Since 2015, Prevention Institute (PI) has studied initiatives and collaboratives across the country consistent with the ACH model. Based on this research and analysis, PI has identified nine core elements across all models (see box at right). The most effective ACH models align community-wide prevention strategies – activities that seek to improve the community conditions that determine much of health *in the first place* – with clinical services, behavioral health, and community and social services. By harnessing the collective efforts of a broad range of stakeholders who frequently operate in silos, an ACH can maximize resources and develop a set of strategies to improve communities' health, safety, and equity.

Core Elements of an Accountable Community for Health

1. **Mission**
2. **Multi-Sectoral Partnership**
3. **Integrator Organization**
4. **Governance**
5. **Data and Indicators**
6. **Strategy and Implementation**
7. **Community Member Engagement**
8. **Communications**
9. **Sustainable Financing**

What's Unique about the ACH Model?



An ACH advances previous efforts in community health by engaging healthcare as a central partner. Still emerging as an approach, the ACH model is unique in that it:

- Engages a broad set of partners, including healthcare, public health, and other organizations and sectors;
- Focuses on the health of all residents in a geographic area rather than just a patient panel;
- Brings together major healthcare providers across the geographic area to operate as partners;
- Identifies multiple resources that can be applied to ACH-defined objectives;
- Explores the potential for redirecting savings from healthcare costs in order to sustain collaborative efforts.

How to Develop Comprehensive ACH Strategies

The development of ACH strategies should be guided by an overarching strategic framework and implementation plan that reflects its cross-sector approach to health improvement and the commitment by its partners (healthcare, local government, public health, business, and non-profits) to support implementation. Frameworks to support strategy development include the Spectrum of Preventionⁱ, which encourages complementary activities ranging from individual to community-wide interventions to support greater effectiveness of population health transformation; and The Three Buckets of Prevention,ⁱⁱ which emphasizes a balance between traditional clinical, innovative clinical, and community-wide prevention strategies. In California, models are being supported to align strategies across five domains: clinical care, community programs and social services, community-clinical linkages, public policy and systems change, and environment changes to promote health.

ACHs in Action

ACHs have been launched in the states of Washington and Minnesota, and are currently being formed in California and Vermont. These initiatives aim to evaluate and demonstrate the impact that engaging a broad range of stakeholders and employing an aligned portfolio of strategies can have on a geographic region. Meanwhile, through a variety of funding and financing sources, local initiatives across the country continue to demonstrate the important role of establishing multi-sectoral partnerships and implementing comprehensive, evidence-informed strategies to advance population health.

For example, the **Live Well San Diego** Initiative was adopted in 2010 by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors as a 10-year plan to improve the well-being of county residents. The initiative includes over 120 recognized partners aligning their efforts to engage in cross-cutting strategies to achieve the vision of a healthy, safe, and thriving county. The Live Well strategy encompasses actions to support economic prosperity and community safety as pivotal to health improvement, along with more traditional clinical and community health promotion efforts.

In Washington State, the **Healthy Living Collaborative of Southwest Washington** exemplifies ACH-type efforts. Recently, the Collaborative's team of community health workers took action when they learned about a 30-day eviction notice given to residents of an apartment complex. The Collaborative used its network, including healthcare partners, to not only secure replacement housing for nearly 80 households but also to change a city ordinance to require a 90-day eviction notice. This was a first step towards protecting affordable housing for other residents.

In partnership with The California Endowment, Blue Shield Foundation of California, and the Kaiser Permanente Foundation, Community Partners established the **California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative (CACHI)**. CACHI will support the collaboration of key sectors and partners from the community to the healthcare delivery system to collectively advance a health goal, linking activities in a coherent and reinforcing portfolio of strategies to achieve meaningful and lasting improvements in individual and population health.

The ACH model highlights the value of multi-sectoral partnerships to move communities toward a more effective and equitable system of health. The resources below provide more information on the model and its role in population health improvement. For more information, please contact us at 510-444-7738 or prevent@preventioninstitute.org.

Resources

The following resources can be found on our website: www.preventioninstitute.org/focus-areas/reforming-our-health-system.html.

- [Accountable Communities for Health: Opportunities and Recommendations](#)
- [Healthier By Design: Creating Accountable Care Communities](#)
- [Accountable Communities for Health: A 'Portfolio of Strategies' Approach to Improving Population Health](#)

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ⁱ Prevention Institute. The Spectrum of Prevention: Developing a Comprehensive Approach To Injury Prevention. Prevention Institute website. http://www.preventioninstitute.org/index.php?option=com_jlibrary&view=article&id=105&Itemid=127. August 1999. Accessed January 4, 2016.

ⁱⁱ Auerbach J. The 3 Buckets of Prevention. *J Public Health Management Practice*. 2015. http://journals.lww.com/jphmp/Citation/pubshahead/The_3_Buckets_of_Prevention_.99695.aspx. Accessed January 4, 2016.