

North Carolina's Guide to Prevention and Management of Diabetes **3rd Edition**



What Can Local Communities Do?



MANAGE WEIGHT | LIVE TOBACCO FREE | PARTICIPATE IN LIFESTYLE CHANGE PROGRAMS
PARTICIPATE IN DIABETES EDUCATION | ENGAGE IN TREATMENT PLAN | GET ADEQUATE SLEEP

What Can Local Communities Do?

Community action is seen as necessary to the success of health care transformation. Communities that act through public participation on issues that affect their well-being see more relevant outcomes. Local knowledge and skills need to be equally valued in the planning and decision-making process to ensure that outcomes are aligned with communities' needs and assets. Integration of members of the community including local faith organizations, health departments, community health workers, and health systems in the planning process can help lead to more successful changes.¹⁰⁶



Supportive environments—where we are born, grow, work, and play—are essential for promoting well-being and preventing chronic diseases like diabetes. These environments thrive when they are stable, safe, enjoyable, stimulating, and satisfying, fostering active living and reducing the risk of diabetes. Creating healthy environments is a shared responsibility. Everyone has a role to play—whether through our communities, schools, workplaces, health care systems, local governments, or the media.¹⁰⁵

Community groups, faith-based and non-faith-based organizations, and non-profits are pivotal in building these healthy environments. They can significantly impact diabetes prevention and help those living with diabetes lead healthier lives. However, populations at high risk for diabetes often face barriers such as a lack of safe walking areas, green spaces, adequate lighting, and opportunities for social interaction and

public transportation, all of which are crucial for active living. Supportive social and community environments that foster social interactions can also reduce depression, a common comorbidity of diabetes. Additionally, communities with easy access to grocery stores offering fresh fruits and vegetables encourage healthier diets.

The community has many components. This guide outlines actions that various sectors—schools, media, local governments, faith-based organizations, and non-profits—can take to contribute to healthier environments. Other sectors, such as health care providers, insurers, and employers, also play a critical role from a population-based or community perspective. These roles are explored further in this section and in the sections titled “What Can Health Care Providers and Insurers Do?” (p. 37), and “What Can Employers Do?” (p. 43).

Schools, Community Colleges, and Universities

Though schools and universities belong to the larger area of communities, there are some specific actions schools can do to affect the health and wellbeing of their students and families. Healthy lifestyles start at the beginning. As children and young adults spend a large amount of time within the school walls, schools, school boards, and colleges/universities have a unique opportunity to influence the current and future health of students.

The incorporation of school nurses and/or student health services in the development of programs for those at risk for diabetes or with diabetes is essential. Educational institutions of all types should have adequate policies in place to support the diabetes prevention behaviors outlined above as well as sufficient staff, equipment and resources to provide routine and emergent care for their students who may have diabetes.

The Media

The media plays a vital role in raising awareness about diabetes, educating the public on the disease, its risk factors, and highlighting the seriousness of the epidemic. It has a critical responsibility to incorporate accurate, impactful messaging about diabetes in public service announcements, broadcasts, and printed materials. Media coverage can draw attention to the urgent need for increased resources to support diabetes research and care. Collaboration between individuals with diabetes, health care providers, community leaders, and the media is essential to ensure that messages are factual, engaging, and resonate with both general and targeted audiences. Sharing personal stories of struggle and triumph can be particularly powerful in raising awareness. Whether local or national, in print or digital (radio, TV, online), media outreach is crucial not only in reaching those at risk or living with diabetes but also in influencing policymakers.¹⁰⁷ Media can spotlight health disparities, such as access to healthy food, physical activity, health care, and the rising cost of medications like insulin, furthering the cause of diabetes prevention and management.

Local and State Government

Local and state governments have a significant impact on community health by fostering dialogue on a wide range of health opportunities and supporting the implementation of programs and policies. These efforts extend beyond what government alone can achieve, encouraging community action to enhance

the health and well-being of the entire population. Leaders at the local and state levels can help reduce the burden of diabetes in North Carolina by forming partnerships, providing support, and distributing this plan to communities and stakeholders.

Faith-based Organizations^{108, 109}

Faith-based organizations are central to communities, particularly within the African American population, where they play a key role in health promotion. These organizations are well-positioned to address health disparities and promote health equity. Faith-based groups are also known for their outreach in addressing various health barriers, including financial, social, employment, illness, hunger, transportation, and child or elder care.^{110, 111} The trust and respect between faith leaders, clergy, and congregants create a strong foundation for discussions, education, and support around all aspects of diabetes.

Non-profit/Other Organizations

Non-profit organizations are another crucial element in the community support network, providing essential services such as food, housing, clothing, transportation, financial assistance, computers, and employment support. Other organizations focus on advocacy, health policy, and ongoing support for individuals with diabetes. At local, state, and national levels, these organizations work tirelessly to reduce the burden of diabetes and improve the quality of life for North Carolinians with prediabetes or diabetes.

North Carolina has a plan to address overweight and obesity by advocating how we balance how we eat, drink and move called ***North Carolina's Plan to Address Overweight and Obesity***.¹¹² It outlines the prevalence of overweight and obesity in North Carolina, the preventable costs of obesity, the hunger-obesity paradox, and the role of the Social Determinants of Health. It outlines eight core behaviors that, if addressed at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, public policy, and environmental levels, would reduce overweight and obesity. Note these same behaviors prevent diabetes.

- Move more
- Eat more healthy food, less junk and fast food
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Drink more water. Drink fewer sugar sweetened beverages
- Sit less
- Start and continue to breastfeed
- Get enough sleep
- Manage stress



Table 4: Activities for Community Groups (Faith, Non-Faith, Non-Profit, Local Government, Media)

Diabetes Primary Prevention	Diabetes Prevention for People at High Risk	Diabetes Management and Prevention of Complications
<p>To help manage weight and/or follow healthy eating guidelines</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer free or low-cost community classes on eating healthy on a budget. 2. Ask local employers to work with food vendors who source locally. 3. Incorporate programs such as a community garden to help bring fresh foods into communities, classrooms or lunchrooms. 4. Offer DPP programs through student health at community colleges and universities, or as family classes in primary and secondary schools. 5. Regulate portion sizes. 6. Reformulate foods. 7. Encourage the availability of healthful food in public spaces, all schools and universities, community colleges and colleges, and at public events (fairs, food truck rallies). 8. Restrict the availability of unhealthy foods in public spaces, such as vending machines. 9. Tax unhealthful foods and subsidize nutritious foods. 10. Incentivize the building of supermarkets in low-income food deserts. 11. Increase participation in federal, state and local government food and nutrition programs (WIC, SNAP, CACFP), etc. 12. Engage at the local and state government levels to develop and implement policies, programs and activities designed to improve the health of North Carolinians and reduce the burden of diabetes. 13. Refer people to evidence-based weight loss programs including those offered through diabetes prevention programs, or North Carolina's Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less or a registered dietitian nutritionist for weight management. 	<p>To help manage weight and/or participate in regular physical activity at the community level and to sustain those completing diabetes prevention programs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish and promote walking and cycling clubs. 2. Partner with existing health and fitness facilities (e.g. YMCA, gyms, etc.). 3. Collaborate with local Cardio/Pulmonary Rehabilitation programs. <p>To help participation in diabetes prevention education programs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect and disseminate information about local Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES) services. 2. Partner with a sponsoring agency such as a local health department to offer diabetes prevention programs in your congregation or community center. 3. Build partnerships with local health departments and hospitals to sponsor health fairs, with diabetes risk screening and medical follow-up for those at high risk for prediabetes, and referrals to DPP. 4. Work with health care providers or state agencies to train Community Health Workers to screen for diabetes within communities and refer to appropriate care. 5. Promote awareness of prediabetes on national point days like Diabetes Alert Day, International Diabetes Day and Diabetes Awareness Month. 6. Partner with local public health safety net providers to offer tips for people at risk for diabetes on national point days like World Diabetes Day, Diabetes Alert Day and Diabetes Awareness Month. 	<p>To help participation in individual and/or group self-management education programs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partner with a sponsoring agency to become an expansion site to deliver Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support services. 2. Offer support groups for people who have diabetes and their caregivers. 3. Partner with hospitals to offer diabetes education to reduce hospital readmissions. 4. Partner with faith-based nursing/health groups throughout the state to offer further services within their congregations. 5. Encourage peer support programs. This may include offering of space to hold support groups, including time for peer support in community DSMES services. <p>To help persist with personalized diabetes treatment plans</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise funds for Safety Net Providers to help them offset the cost of medications and supplies for people with diabetes. 2. Promote proper diabetes care through use of posters, bulletin inserts, and sermons. 3. Create and support peer education programs targeting geographic gaps in available accredited programs.

To help manage weight and/or participate in regular physical activity

1. Advocate for walkable communities, including sidewalks, green spaces, walking trails.
2. Advocate for outdoor lighting for tracks and other recreational areas.
3. Promote comprehensive physical activity programs in schools and after school programs.
4. Offer free group physical activity in public parks.
5. Develop and implement land use and neighborhood design policies to support active lifestyles.
6. Promote worksite policies that encourage physical activity.
7. Allow shared and/or open use of facilities (e.g., school tracks).
8. Refer people to **Eat Smart, Move More, NC** for strategies to manage weight or participate in regular physical activity.

To help live tobacco free

1. Increase the tax on tobacco products
2. Limit the use of tobacco products in public spaces.
3. Educate about the dangers of Vaping.
4. Advocate for alternate tobacco advertising.

To promote adequate sleep

1. Promote sleep health for individuals.
2. Set expectations for minimal rest/sleep intervals for workers, especially those who make critical decisions (e.g. health care workers, transportation workers).
3. Identify additional resources to promote adequate sleep, such as those found in **Eat Smart, Move More, NC**.

Other Opportunities for Local Governments¹¹³

Consider this partial list of opportunities that your local government might do to encourage the prevention of diabetes through the encouragement of healthy body weight and adequate physical activity:

- Create complete streets and sidewalks.
- Support active transportation (walking, biking, transit).
- Develop shared and/or open use agreements so schools, libraries, and other sites can become places for community physical activity.
- Subsidize park, recreation, and fitness center memberships.
- Promote community gardens/urban agriculture.
- Encourage local stores to stock healthy foods.
- Develop licensing restrictions to reduce “food swamps.”
- Use menu/calorie labeling/appropriate portion sizes.
- Promote/support breastfeeding.
- Adopt healthy worksite policies.
- Pass a soda/sugar sweetened beverage tax.
- Offer on-site wellness programming (physical activity, nutrition, DPP) with focus on sites with at risk populations (police officers, firefighters, streets and sanitation workers, essential personnel).
- Support state Medicaid coverage for obesity treatment, National DPP, or DSMES.
- Double up food bucks for buying fruits and vegetables with SNAP at Farmers Markets.
- Provide universal health care and mental health care.
- Offer paid family leave.
- Be a leader in policy change that allows RNs and Pharmacists to be reimbursed for providing DSMES for people who have Medicaid or private insurance in North Carolina.
- Be a leader in policy change and permanently make changes to Telehealth delivery and reimbursement of diabetes services that were approved during the COVID-19 public health emergency for Medicaid and private insurers in North Carolina.





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11/2024



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