

*In Nevada, getting the “prevention” message out to the public is tough. The layout of the land—miles of sparse desert scattered with small communities—complicates advertisement of health promotion campaigns. Citizens seldom seek out education on disease prevention and improving community health. Nevada’s suicide rate ranks fourth in the nation, and the state stands high in its rate of alcohol- and tobacco-related illnesses. Nevada has yet to ban smoking in daycare centers and grocery stores. It’s safe to assume prevention isn’t getting its fair share of water-cooler talk.*

## Nevada Turning Point Is Anybody Out There?

Nevada has two full-service local health departments, in urban Clark and Washoe counties, and a third developing in Carson City. Clark County Health District, located in the nation’s fastest growing county, serves 1.5 million residents in the area surrounding Las Vegas. Washoe County Health Department’s jurisdiction extends 6,600 square miles from Lake Tahoe to the Idaho border. Carson City, located 33 miles west of Reno, recently appointed a County Board of Health and is expanding its range of public health services. Nevada State Health Division provides public health services

throughout the remaining 95,884 square miles of the state. Local and state health officers who participated in Turning Point’s formative stages asked Nevada Public Health Foundation to help get the prevention message out and to build a statewide constituency to support public health.

To build a statewide constituency, Nevada Turning Point sought to put the public in public health—getting information out to Nevada’s citizenry, but also getting information back about how they think public health can improve their lives. The challenge was reaching the public in a comprehensive way. Technology answered the need. However, the Foundation lacked the funds to create an electronic communication system. With direction and funding from the Turning Point Initiative, the Foundation developed a system,

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and the Citizens’ Public Health Network was born.

The new program works as a high-powered database that categorizes and quickly sorts contacts by groups and regions, allowing the Foundation to disseminate information quickly and efficiently. It allows for bulk e-mailing and provides Internet capabilities the Foundation

didn’t previously have. Using the Network, the Foundation now has a technological connection with public health officials, federal and state legislators, schools, community organizations, faith communities, and other commu-

nity members who can both use the information and distribute it to their own constituencies.

The Network provides Nevada communities with public health contacts and resources they can reach with a click of the mouse or a dial of the phone. Public health agencies and community-based organizations can, if they choose, use the Network as a conduit for informing people of the state, a particular region, or an interest group about prevention strategies, public health events, training opportunities, or public health policy issues.

The Citizens’ Public Health Network gives Nevada a broadcast medium to get the prevention message beyond the public health community to the public itself and to hear what the public has to say in return.

# At a Glance: Nevada



## Aim of Nevada Turning Point

Nevada Turning Point's goal is an improved public health system that promotes health and prevents disease. Nevada Turning Point listens to, educates, and mobilizes Nevadans to improve the health of their communities and strengthen the public health system so it can respond to emerging public health challenges.

## Nevada's Public Health Challenges

Nevada's smoking rates and health problems from tobacco are among the highest in the nation. Yet Nevada is one of the few states that does not allow local governments to regulate tobacco. Nevada has the highest proportion of suicides in the nation, double the national rate. Nevadans report poorer health than the rest of the nation and engage in more risk behaviors that contribute to poor health. Despite these facts and a dramatic increase in population in the past decade (over a 66% increase over ten years), there has not been an increase in state spending for health promotion and disease prevention since 1992. Only two of Nevada's seventeen counties have a local health department, and the lack of any school of public health translates to fewer educational opportunities for new and existing public health workers.

## Nevada Turning Point's Contribution to Improving Public Health

Nevada Turning Point has:

- Developed a Citizens' Public Health Network to establish connections among Nevadans and their organizations to increase collaboration and success in achieving community improvements
- Joined with the Utah Department of Health to create the Great Basin Public Health Leadership Institute
- Improved policy and programming related to tobacco use and suicide prevention
- Collaborated with communities to develop local public health systems in Nevada's rural communities
- Offered community education on public health issues and the political process
- Educated elected officials and government managers about public health issues

## For More Information

Lynn Carrigan, Administrator  
or Rocky Polito, Project Manager  
Nevada Public Health Foundation  
305 N. Carson Street, Suite 200, Carson City, NV 89701  
tel: (775) 884-0392 e-mail: [lynn@nphf.org](mailto:lynn@nphf.org) or [rocky@nphf.org](mailto:rocky@nphf.org)