

Consider: “There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more serious to conduct, or more uncertain in success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things, because the innovator has for enemies all who did well under the old conditions, and only lukewarm defenders of those who may do well in the new” (Machiavelli, 1505)

Wisconsin Turning Point Social Change in Action

This fear —*lukewarm defenders of those who may do well in the new*— was one of several transformation obstacles identified by a small group of innovators in 1998. They were told they were “overtaken by madness” and instead of transforming the public health system they were on a course to destroy it. Consider some of the obstacles they faced. Although people cared about “public health,” they lacked common agreement on basic definitions. They lacked a compelling set of statewide priorities. Policies, programs, and ways of thinking impeded change. Partnerships were needed yet trust was lacking. The focus was on programs rather than on the system.

The public health system was viewed as the “country cousin” to health care. No matter how hard and how effective they were, the label stuck. Policy leaders viewed public health as a program— not as a system. They viewed its priorities as “everything but the kitchen sink.” “Balkanized information systems” impeded health status evaluation. Tall order of challenges? You bet! But they had hope, idealism, courage, and opportunity. They didn’t have a model so they built one with their partners.

The Turning Point Initiative is Wisconsin’s statewide policy process for change. It has produced a legislatively mandated state health plan (and implementation plan), *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010: A Partnership Plan to Improve the Health of the Public*. The Initiative’s work is grounded in science, strategic planning, quality assurance, and collaborative partnerships. It inspires a collective consciousness that it takes the work of many to improve the health for all.

The Initiative has brought policy, data, partners, process, and measurement into alignment. It directly links *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010* to the department’s Strategic Plan. It created a framework— a transformational pathway— that depicts the vision, core functions, essential services, goals, priorities, and desired outcomes (1) improve the health of the public, and (2) improve public health system capacity.



And the results? Now the department and its partners align their work and federal grants to the framework’s essential services, goals, and priorities. Many of the partners own *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010* as their own plan. Local health departments have linked local priorities to the statewide priorities. An external community governance structure was formed to monitor implementation and champion transformation. And finally, Wisconsin’s two conversion foundations have formally gone on record to award 35 percent of the total resources to communities who link their grant applications to the priorities of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*.

At a Glance: *Wisconsin*



Aim of Wisconsin Turning Point

Wisconsin Turning Point reflects a transformation in the way Wisconsin operates its public health system and addresses its priorities. Maintaining the health of the public was once solely identified as a governmental responsibility, but Turning Point in Wisconsin aims to define more broadly the roles and responsibilities for improving the health of Wisconsin communities and its 5.4 million residents.

Wisconsin's Public Health Challenges

Poor access to health services, inadequate nutrition, exposure to environmental hazards, emerging infectious diseases, and other issues are priority areas for intervention if Wisconsin's public health leaders are to improve the health of Wisconsin residents. Wisconsin's public health system must be restructured to eliminate health disparities and protect and promote the health of all. No one sector can maximize improvements in the health of Wisconsin residents; multi-sector partnerships focused on health promotion and disease prevention are crucial for success.

Wisconsin Turning Point's Contribution to Improving Public Health

Wisconsin Turning Point led the development of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010: A Partnership Plan to Improve the Health of the Public*. This strategic health plan focuses on health promotion, disease prevention, and building a strong public health system with the partners. Wisconsin Turning Point is also:

- Developing policy recommendations to improve public health laws that provide legal support for the protection of Wisconsin residents
- Ensuring good management of resources through quality assurance activities with public health partners
- Creating model practices, such as award-winning, countywide coalitions for early childhood immunization
- Facilitating innovative state, federal, and private partnerships to solve access issues and other public health challenges
- Expanding academic/community partnerships to advance health throughout the state

Wisconsin Turning Point's Unique Transformational Framework Includes

- A shared vision of Wisconsin's public health system (shared by all partners)
- Core principles and values (social justice, common good, and creating positive futures for all)
- Establishing five infrastructure priorities as the "engine" for collective action by the partners
- Overarching goals of eliminating health disparities, promoting and protecting health for all, and transforming Wisconsin's public health system

For More Information

Margaret Schmelzer, State Health Plan and Public Health Policy Officer
Bureau of Public Health Information and Planning
Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services
1 West Wilson Street, Room 250, Madison, WI 53701-2659
tel: (608) 266-0877 e-mail: schmemo@dhfs.state.wi.us