

INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

Purpose: An Environmental Scan of Health and Health Care in North Dakota is designed to:

(1) provide an overview of the status of selected health and health care issues in North Dakota, (2) identify some of the key programs and organizations involved in these issues, (3) highlight gaps in information or resources, (4) present measures that can help to assess the status of each of the issues, and (5) inform the development of programs and policies that can advance solutions to health problems. The information presented in the environmental scan can be used by a variety of stakeholders to support efforts to improve health and access to high quality health care services, as well as enhance practical knowledge and collaboration. Meaningful, public-private collaboration is needed among all major stakeholders in order to create conditions necessary to assure the best possible health (Committee on Assuring the Health of the Public in the 21st Century, Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2003).

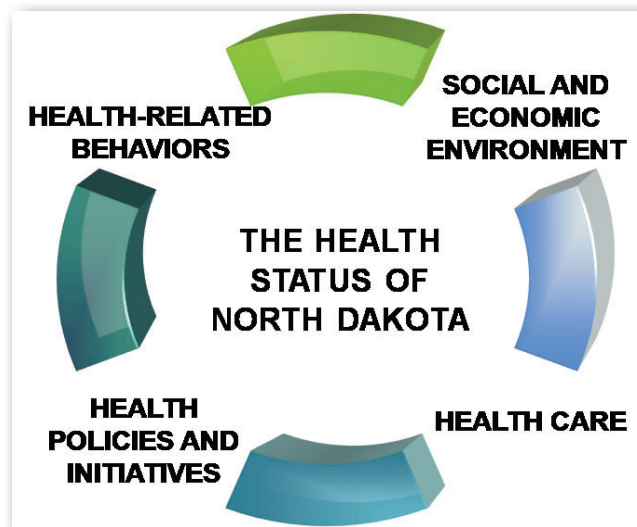
Approach: The framework used to guide the development of this report derives from frameworks presented in two important documents. First, the Environmental Scan adapts some elements of the Institute of Medicine's *State of the USA Health Indicators*, which establishes the influences of (1) social and physical environment, (2) health-related behaviors, and (3) health systems on health outcomes (2009). The Scan is also aligned with the framework from Healthy People 2010, which recognizes the significance of the combined effects of individuals and community as well as policies and interventions that can promote health, prevent disease, and ensure access to quality health care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). For the purposes of this report, *health* is defined by health-related quality of life, population morbidity, mortality, and major health conditions (e.g., chronic diseases). *Health care* includes institutions and actors directly involved in care delivery as well as the *public health* system that attempts to improve or maintain health by affecting health-related behaviors and environmental factors (IOM, 2009).

The Center for Rural Health team used multiple methods and data sources to obtain perspectives on health and health care in the state. Conducted from December 2008 through mid-February 2009, the Environmental Scan includes

1. A review of the existing literature and information on a pre-determined set of North Dakota health and health care issues (the issue set was developed with input from Dakota Medical Foundation);
2. Descriptive analysis of information pertinent to the selected issues, including a scan of public and private initiatives designed to address these issues; and
3. A series of interviews with health care stakeholders to provide current perspectives on directions in health and health care in North Dakota.

Selection of the health and health care measures in this scan is based on their importance to and their impact on health status, severity of the problem at present, and data availability to measure change in the measures over time. A comprehensive search for relevant information was conducted related to each topic included in the Environmental Scan. However, for the sake of brevity and utility, only key descriptive and actionable information is presented. Where possible, relevant state-based trend information and national benchmarks are included and financial data are provided. Typically, an array of measures are used to characterize both health and health care (Mathers, Murray, Ezzati, Gakidou, Salomon, & Stein, 2003) given the complexity and multidimensional nature of health. Consequently, many measures associated with the topics are delineated and accompanied by the most recent, comparative data (for illustrative purposes, a number of measures, and items that lend themselves to being measured, are italicized throughout the narrative).

Where data is available, comparisons are made between urban and rural areas of the state and between various subpopulations. Such comparisons are useful in order to efficiently target both attention and public and private interventions. While future efforts should factor in differentials based on regional variation, a comprehensive approach to addressing the state's health-related issues should involve key stakeholders working together to leverage the ideas and strengths available across the entire state and on behalf of all citizens of North Dakota.



Uses: The environmental scan is intended to stimulate collaborative action by health organizations, health providers, policy makers, community representatives and others. In addition to information about health and health care topics, there is also information presented about projects underway to address these topics, as well as measures that can be used to track changes in health and health care status. Working together, policymakers can use the scan to identify health and health care challenges and potential public policy interventions. Researchers can use the report to determine gaps in knowledge that need to be filled. Community representatives can find useful facts to generate local dialogue across businesses, non-profit organizations and others to improve the well being of communities. Media can use the information provided to inform their reporting on some of the state's priority health problems. The material presented in the report can be of use to grant writers developing proposals on health related issues. From local to across the state, new partnerships that are collaborative, strategic, and focused on measurable change can be pursued. The environmental scan provides a foundation for initiating some of this important work.

Organization: Volume I of the report presents information about environmental context (social, demographic, economic, and educational); health status of the North Dakota population (leading health indicators, causes of death, and health problems common in the state); and health care in

REGARDING THE STRENGTHS OF HEALTH CARE IN NORTH DAKOTA—

“They have a really keen sense of their mission and their obligation to make sure their neighbors have the best possible care...They’re all in the boat together and they have to pull together.”

McCarthy et. al, The Commonwealth Fund, 2008.

North Dakota (types and features of health infrastructure including information regarding quality, access, and financing). Volume II includes information about health-related resources (initiatives and organizations) in North Dakota (federal, state, and non-governmental) and a set of health-related measures, rankings, rates, and comparisons associated with the state of North Dakota. These health measures are commonly used to track the health of individuals, communities, states and nations. Individuals that provided information for the report as well as the references used in the report are presented in this volume.