

Advocacy and Policy Development

Heart disease* and stroke* are as much political issues as they are medical, psychological or economic issues. Every day, policy makers make decisions that affect the lives of heart disease and stroke patients and their families, as well as future patients. The Wyoming State Plan for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention includes advocacy as a significant strategy to influence policy decisions related to cardiovascular disease.

Advocacy is an action designed to influence decision makers and citizens at all levels regarding any given issue. This is accomplished by informing targeted citizens or groups; or by educating and speaking about the issue; or by talking to policy makers regarding specific policy proposals; or by lobbying. An advocate is anyone who participates in the process of influencing policy change.

By law, Wyoming state government employees cannot lobby as part of their jobs, as it could be considered a conflict of interest. However, they can share the focused information and data they research as an important part of the advocacy effort. It then falls to the Advocacy Advisory Committee within the Cardiovascular Disease Coalition to lobby for policies that are considered essential to reducing the burden of heart disease and stroke in Wyoming.

The focus of this plan is to not only advocate for priority objectives, but to act as a bridge between other chronic disease advocacy groups. Multiple advocacy groups can have a bigger voice if they work together on a common objective. The Advocacy Advisory

Committee will prepare common priority issues and present them to the Wyoming CVD Coalition for a vote of support and to outside groups to get their endorsements and votes of support.

The Advocacy Advisory Committee will develop mechanisms to keep coalition members updated on current issues regarding heart disease and stroke. These issues may be, but are not limited to, legislative policies, government regulations, or city ordinances. The Advisory Committee will also inform other coalition members as to the proper procedures when advocating. Another aspect of the Advocacy Advisory Committee is to put a face on the human side of heart disease and stroke when advocating.

 **Goal #8** 

Enhance the capacity of the Wyoming Cardiovascular Disease Coalition and other concerned individuals and organizations that advocate for priority heart disease and stroke related issues.

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Objective 1

Promote increased awareness about Wyoming's heart disease and stroke burden.

Action Plan:

- Develop marketing methods to help explain the goals, objectives and strategies tied to the 2008-2010 Wyoming State Plan for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention.



- Recruit and retain partners, including but not limited to, survivors, stakeholders, community groups and media.
- Act on behalf of cardiovascular issues to the newly formed Chronic Disease Integration Congress.
- Inform and educate policy makers about the importance of the CVD Coalition and its priorities.

Objective 2

Advocate for heart disease and stroke related policies and legislative issues.

Action Plan:

- Serve as a liaison between other advocacy groups and the CVD Coalition in order

to obtain approval on priority agenda items.

- Develop guidelines and policies to utilize when working with policy makers.
- Integrate other chronic disease programming policies where possible in order to adequately decrease risk factors in Wyoming.
- Choose coalition priorities based on data driven decisions.
- Research existing resources and create policy-related toolkits.
- Develop a train-the-trainer process to educate Wyoming people about the State Plan for Heart and Stroke Prevention and its impact on the health of Wyoming citizens and costs to the state.



Signs and Symptoms



The Wyoming Department of Health encourages everyone to know, and help others learn, the signs and symptoms of a heart attack and stroke.

For more information, or to order materials, visit the website of the *Wyoming Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program* at: www.health.wyo.gov/PHSD/heartdisease.

