The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), particularly through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), plays an important role in supporting the state and local public health infrastructure. HHS provides national surveillance of infectious disease, applied research to develop new or improved diagnoses, prevention and control strategies, and helps strengthen state’s capacity to respond to outbreaks of new or reemerging disease. The CDC provides a global health perspective and assists states in detecting new and emerging diseases. Federal support through grants and cooperative agreements, research and technical assistance is key to the stabilization and effective operation of the nation’s public health system and provides critical support for the state and local public health infrastructure.

NCSL urges Congress to continue: (1) to support grants and cooperative agreements to states and local governments for a broad range of public health activities; and (2) to support research and technical assistance, which aids states in the development and implementation of effective programs. In addition, NCSL wishes to foster the development of public and private sector partnerships to increase community accessibility to public health information and public health programs.

**HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION**

An informed public is an important component of a healthy society. NCSL urges the Congress to continue to support public health education initiatives that are culturally sensitive, age appropriate and written at the appropriate educational level for the audience. It is imperative that these public health education initiatives integrate healthy lifestyle choices and disease prevention messages and strategies targeted for children, young adults, men, women, the elderly as well as other specifically identified populations within the community who have special healthcare concerns, needs and risks.

- **Healthy and Responsible Lifestyle Choices** - NCSL supports programs that promote healthy lifestyle choices, reducing high-risk behaviors through education, counseling and treatment. NCSL urges the federal government to provide adequate funding for these initiatives—prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). NCSL also urges the federal government to develop additional education initiatives to better inform the public about the prevention, diagnosis and symptoms of the broad range of STDs. NCSL supports efforts to alert the public to the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and supports special efforts directed to children and pregnant women. Special efforts must also be undertaken to highlight the dangers of sharing needles among intravenous drug abusers. NCSL supports efforts to inform the public of the dangers of smoking, secondhand smoke, and the use of smokeless tobacco, including their relation to oral health, cardiovascular, lung, cancer of multiple types and other diseases. Special efforts should be made to warn pregnant women of the dangers of smoking, drug and alcohol use during pregnancy. NCSL also supports special efforts designed to educate children regarding the health effects of smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco. More must be done with respect to public education on the means of transmission and ways to avoid or minimize exposure to HIV infection. Efforts should be made to target areas with a high incidence of sexually transmitted disease, tuberculosis, HIV infection and/or intravenous drug abuse. NCSL supports federal efforts to inform the public about new therapies that improve the health status of HIV-infected individuals.
• **Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant** - The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant provides funds to states for preventive health and health promotion activities and is the primary federal source of funding to states for health education and risk reduction activities; cholesterol, hypertension, and cancer screenings. States are given maximum flexibility to design and implement programs that meet the needs of their citizens. NCSL urges Congress to continue to support this program.

• **Preventive Health Screenings and Check-Ups** - NCSL urges Congress to increase support for initiatives that promote regularized preventive health screenings and check-ups. NCSL is particularly supportive of efforts that provide information about and promote screening for: cardiovascular disease, dental disease; obesity, asthma, diabetes, and cancer. We also support efforts to ensure that children receive age appropriate check-ups and screenings that include recommended childhood immunizations; and dental, vision and hearing screenings; and recommended follow-up treatment.

• **Chronic Disease Management** - NCSL urges Congress to continue to support initiatives that promote the management of chronic conditions such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, dental disease, diabetes, asthma, kidney disease and a wide range of autoimmune diseases. Management of these conditions improves the quality of life of the individuals and their families and is more cost efficient for the health care system. NCSL is particularly supportive of initiatives that provide case management services to children with one or more chronic conditions. Early diagnosis, treatment and management is key to helping children with chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes to stay on grade level at school and to become healthier adults.

• **Healthy and Responsible Lifestyle Choices** - NCSL supports programs that promote healthy lifestyle choices, reducing high-risk behaviors through education, counseling and treatment. NCSL urges the federal government to provide adequate funding for the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). NCSL also urges the federal government to develop additional education initiatives to better inform the public about the prevention, diagnosis and symptoms of the broad range of STDs. NCSL supports efforts to alert the public to the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and supports special efforts directed to children and pregnant women. Special efforts must also be undertaken to highlight the dangers of sharing needles among intravenous drug abusers. NCSL supports efforts to inform the public of the dangers of smoking, second-hand smoke, and the use of smokeless tobacco, including their relation to oral health, cardiovascular, lung, cancer of multiple types and other diseases. Special efforts should be made to warn pregnant women of the dangers of smoking, drug and alcohol use during pregnancy. NCSL also supports special efforts designed to educate children regarding the health effects of smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco. More must be done with respect to public education on the means of transmission and ways to avoid or minimize exposure to HIV infection. Efforts should be made to target areas with a high incidence of sexually transmitted disease, tuberculosis, HIV-infection and/or intravenous drug abuse. NCSL supports federal efforts to inform the public about new therapies that improve the health status of HIV-infected individuals.

• **Oral Health** - NCSL supports federal initiatives to promote oral health by encouraging individuals to have regular check-ups and to practice good oral hygiene. These initiatives should include educational activities that emphasize the importance of good dental hygiene and care to overall good health. While some of the best dental care in the world is available in the United States of America, many Americans people are unable to access dental care because they lack dental coverage and the means to afford the out-of-pocket cost of care. In addition, many areas both urban and rural have concerns about the distribution of dental professionals. NCSL supports efforts to increase access to quality, affordable dental care, including initiatives to improve public and private sector coverage of dental services, improve oral health literacy within the public, and provide states flexibility to develop innovative Medicaid dental programs to increase access to and utilization of oral health care services.
• Medicare and Medicaid

The Medicare and Medicaid programs and services should include the goal of health promotion and disease prevention.

• Health Education for Health Care Professionals - NCSL believes that health care professionals need to become better informed on health care promotion and disease prevention strategies so that they can better inform the people they serve. NCSL supports efforts to encourage institutions that train health professionals to include in their curriculum a greater emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention.

• Access to Health Screenings and Disease Treatment - NCSL supports efforts to encourage insurers and other third party payers, including Medicare and Medicaid, to cover cancer-screening tests. NCSL supports federal initiatives to improve coverage of cancer screenings, tests and treatments that have been shown on the basis of evidence-based evaluation to be beneficial for the population served.

VACCINES AND IMMUNIZATIONS

• Childhood Immunizations - NCSL supports initiatives designed to increase the overall number of children immunized. We are particularly supportive of efforts to increase federal funding for the Section 317 program to more closely match the increasing costs and number of recommended childhood vaccines. NCSL also supports initiatives that would use alternative sites such as schools, community health centers or other community settings to deliver vaccines to children when appropriate, cost effective and convenient. NCSL urges the federal government to continue and to increase public education initiatives designed to provide parents with the most up-to-date information regarding recommended immunizations for children. NCSL also supports continued research to improve the safety and efficacy of childhood immunizations. NCSL urges the Congress and the Administration to work with states to make certain that every child receives the recommended childhood immunizations and to improve our immunization funding and policies to help meet that goal. Finally, NCSL urges Congress to continue to allow states to set child vaccine coverage policy.

• Adult Immunizations - NCSL urges the Congress to continue efforts to increase the number of adults who receive recommended immunizations. NCSL supports the special efforts being made to encourage high-risk adults to receive flu shots.

• Vaccine Supply - NCSL urges the Congress to appropriate sufficient funds to maintain a reasonable stockpile of pediatric vaccine, seasonal influenza vaccine and vaccines that may be used during a flu pandemic so that everyone who needs an immunization can be served.

• Smallpox Vaccine - NCSL urges the CDC to continue to keep state and local governments informed regarding the appropriate use of the smallpox vaccine. We urge the federal government to continue research to develop a safer vaccine. NCSL supports the Smallpox Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, that provides compensation and health care coverage to public health workers and medical response team workers and people who have had contact with them who suffer adverse reactions or complications from the smallpox vaccine. These are important and necessary protections for public health workers, medical response team workers and their families. The implementing regulations for the compensation program set a high threshold for injuries that qualify for compensation. NCSL urges the Congress to
evaluate the program if an event occurs that results in adverse reactions or complications from the smallpox vaccine and to make adjustments if necessary to provide appropriate care and compensation to qualified individuals.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH CARE WORKERS

- **Occupational Hazards/Workplace Safety** - NCSL urges the federal government to support efforts to increase awareness of occupational hazards and ways to avoid accidents in the workplace. Information must be provided to employers and employees and should be included in the national effort to emphasize health promotion and disease prevention.

- **Health Care Workers** - NCSL supports the decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to continue to permit state and local health officials establish guidelines regarding procedures that health care workers infected with HIV or Hepatitis B should be permitted to perform. NCSL also supports the Blood-Borne Pathogen Standard rule promulgated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act. The Blood-Borne Pathogen Standard rule mandates the use of universal precautions in infection control and requires employers to provide workers with training, engineered safety devices, protective clothing, puncture-proof containers for contaminated needles and medical waste, and vaccination against the Hepatitis B virus. The Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act requires employers to solicit input from employees responsible for direct patient care in the identification, evaluation, and selection of engineering and work practice controls.

PANDEMIC AND ALL-HAZARDS PREPAREDNESS

State and local governments are the first line of defense against acts of bioterrorism and other public health emergencies. State legislators are committed to enhancing their states’ ability to prepare for and respond to these events. A strong partnership between and among the states, the federal government, and other public and private non-profit entities is the best way to accomplish this goal. NCSL urges the federal government to: (1) Provide states, territories, and the District of Columbia with direct, sufficient and stable funding to enable them to continue to build and maintain an infrastructure to support ongoing efforts to respond to bioterrorism and other public health emergencies; (2) Pass federal funds through the states for distribution to local governments, hospitals and other entities, permitting state officials to take the lead in planning on a regional and statewide basis, utilizing federal funds in the most efficient and effective way; (3) Require grantees that receive direct funding from the federal government to collaborate with the state and to coordinate all of their activities with the state plan; (4) Afford states the flexibility necessary to meet their diverse needs and priorities; (5) Build upon existing national and state efforts; (6) Ensure that regulations and requirements imposed on states are accompanied by sufficient funding to support implementation, both immediately and in the long term; and (7) Authorize the appropriate federal official to temporarily waive or modify the application of federal laws that may impede implementation of state plans during a bioterrorist attack or other public health emergency.

IMPLEMENTING THE PANDEMIC AND ALL-HAZARDS PREPAREDNESS ACT

NCSL urges the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services include state legislators in the development of National Health Security Strategy and the evidenced-based benchmarks and standards required in the Act.

NCSL urges the Congress to appropriate funds to implement the provisions of the Act designed to increase and improve the public health workforce.
PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- **Lead Poisoning** - NCSL supports federal efforts to prevent and detect lead poisoning in children. NCSL urges the federal government to continue to assist state and local health officials in addressing this serious health care problem.

- **West Nile Virus** - NCSL supports the Mosquito Abatement for Health and Safety Act which provides grants to states to: (1) coordinate mosquito control programs; and (2) assist localities to conduct need assessments and to develop plans for the implementation of a mosquito control program.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

- **Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant** - The MCH block grant provides funds to states to meet a broad range of health services for mothers and children. In addition to formula grants to states, the set aside for special projects of regional and national significance (SPRANS) continues to help states to identify and address special needs. NCSL supports the MCH block grant and urges Congress to continue to provide adequate funding. NCSL opposes efforts to transfer program responsibilities to the MCH block grant without the funding to accompany it, thereby reducing the funding available to functions currently funded through the block grant.

- **Universal Newborn Hearing** - The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening program provides competitive grants to states for the implementation of a national program of universal newborn hearing screening that consists of: (1) physiologic testing prior to hospital discharge; (2) audiologic evaluation by three months of age; and (3) entry into a program of early intervention by six months of age. NCSL supports this program and urges Congress to continue to provide adequate funding.

- **The Children’s Health Act of 2000** - The Children’s Health Act of 2000 authorized funding through the CDC and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to support a broad range of programs designed to improve the health status of children, addressing issues such as birth defects, autism, attention deficit, childhood cancer, fetal alcohol syndrome, limb loss, healthy motherhood, and childhood disabilities. Many of these programs provide grants to states. NCSL urges Congress to continue to support the programs authorized within the Act and to continue to provide this valuable assistance to states. NCSL urges the Congress to continue to support special programs that encourage pregnant women to seek early prenatal care and well-baby services. Efforts should be made to make these services available to all women and children.