

# GETTING TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR THE NATION:

A CALL FOR CROSS-SECTOR ACTION TO IMPACT THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Health begins long before illness or injury strikes—in our homes, schools, neighborhoods, and places of work. The ability of individuals and families to lead healthy and productive lives is influenced by personal choices, as well as our experiences and the conditions in the communities where we live: the social determinants of health.

Appropriately addressing the social determinants of health will require collaborative and innovative approaches across the private and public sectors. Central to this effort is the need to clearly define the value proposition for addressing the social determinants of health, not only as part of the value-based care agenda, but also as part of broad approaches to building healthy communities. The National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH) was formed with this need in mind.

This paper offers our thinking around the essential areas of priority effort needing either continued exploration or added emphasis to systematically address social determinants of health in evidence-based and sustainable ways. We also more fully introduce NASDOH and our efforts to bring clarity to the current understanding of the issues, challenges, and opportunities for the health care system to address social determinants in concert with communities, public officials, and the private sector writ-large.

## Our Areas of Focus:

- 1) Promoting a supportive policy environment at all levels of government and in the private sector
- 2) Framing the issue in a way that promotes action
- 3) Elevating shared learnings across communities
- 4) Leveraging shared approaches to measurement and evaluation
- 5) Encouraging data and technology innovation

We encourage public and private sector leaders to support progress in these key areas by promoting collaboration and innovation around interventions to address social determinants of health.

## THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO IMPACT THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH (NASDOH)

Establishing and promoting an understanding of the value proposition for the US to prioritize the social determinants of health in a way that transcends partisanship, promotes inclusion of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders and partners, including the business community, and highlights the opportunity cost of inaction.



✓ **Consumer and patient organizations**

✓ **Employers**

✓ **Health insurance carriers**

✓ **Public health leaders**

✓ **Health care systems and providers**

✓ **Social service leaders**

✓ **Community development and urban planning experts**

✓ **Venture capital**

✓ **Financial sector interests**

✓ **Philanthropy**

✓ **Technology sector innovators**

✓ **Thought Leaders**

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# I. A NATIONAL PRIORITY TO ADDRESS ALL HEALTH DETERMINANTS

Recently, there has been increased attention to the social determinants of health as an opportunity to bend trends in health in the United States, specifically the stalling or declining measures of the population's health status in the face of rising health care expenditures and costs. Though the public health and social services sectors have long been attentive to driving policy and testing community-level models that can address the social determinants of health, only recently has the national emphasis on moving to a value-based health care system driven the private and public sectors to look at how interventions addressing upstream social and environmental factors can improve health and decrease the need for costly care and procedures. This shift signifies a movement away from a singular view of health as an output of health care and medicine and toward a more holistic view of health as a combination of the impact of social and environmental conditions and personal choices, which can be influenced and improved through a combination of high-value medical care, illness prevention efforts, and social services.

“Social determinants of health are conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.”

– Healthy People 2020

Over time, national attention to the impacting the social determinants of health for individuals and communities may serve to reduce long-term spending on health care while simultaneously improving health and well-being. Initiatives such as benefits flexibility, data sharing and integration, and eliminating unnecessary barriers to coordinating care/services are examples of options that are ways being explored to create a more supportive policy and regulatory environment to achieve optimal health and well-being for all

people in the United States. Moving forward, success and sustainability of efforts addressing the social determinants of health will require shifting the balance of investments on health from treatment to prevention, including investments that address health-related social needs and change the context in which people live, learn, work, pray, and play.

In seeking to build broad support for addressing social determinants of health, it is essential that the conversation transcend partisanship, promote inclusion of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders and partners, including the business community, and highlight the opportunity costs of inaction.<sup>1</sup> There are two major opportunities: (1) broadening the understanding of the importance of the social determinants of health; and (2) systematically addressing social determinants to remove them as barriers to health and well-being. Policy can drive opportunities to influence the social determinants of health. However, more can and should be done through collaboration and partnership in the public and private sectors. Collectively accelerating change and bringing the necessary attention to the social determinants of health in both sectors—including the creation of a more supportive policy environment at the federal, state, and local level—may reduce long-term spending on health and drive better health outcomes for all Americans.

Recognizing the importance of broad engagement across a variety of sectors, NASDOH members include not only those who provide health care and social services, but also nonprofit organizations and representatives of businesses and large employers. The private sector shares a common interest in a healthy workforce and an economically thriving community, and industry has the means to drive significant changes in the promotion of health, inclusive of social determinants.



<sup>1</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “A New Way to Talk About the Social Determinants of Health,” 2010, available at <https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2010/rwjf63023>.

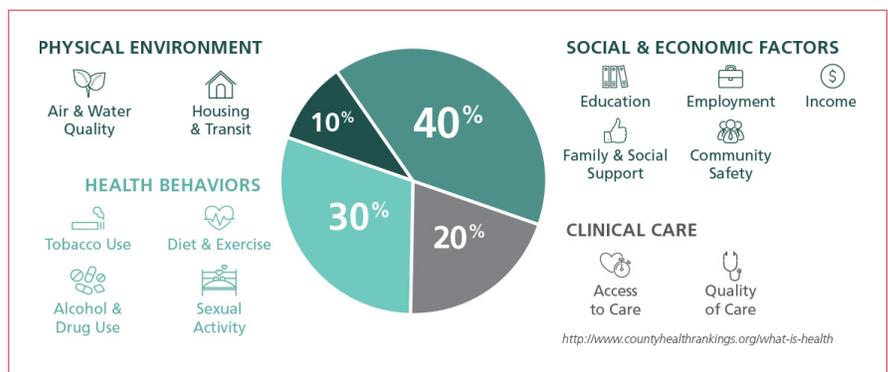
Systematically assessing the social determinant status of populations is another opportunity and an area of active development in the field. Better understanding the needs of populations is integral to filling gaps in care, treatment, and social services. It is also an essential step towards identifying risk for important social factors or conditions, such as food insecurity, that can have a significant impact on health outcomes. Substantial foundational work is already being done to support assessment in the field.<sup>2</sup>

Over time, creating healthy communities is not just essential, but a moral and economic imperative, and one that will require significant investments of time and capital and the creation of innovative solutions that promote a holistic view of health. NASDOH believes that improvements to the health care system are an important first step in the broader efforts and work ahead to address the social determinants of health. The focus and priority of our early work is on establishing a solid foundation by addressing health-related social determinants and better aligning medical care and social care (human and social services provision).

## II. THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH DEFINED AND WHY THEY MATTER

### HEALTH BEGINS WHERE WE LIVE, WORK, LEARN, AND PLAY.

Health and wellbeing are foundational to economic vitality and business competitiveness, personal achievement, and prosperity. An increased level of health for all Americans is key to the promotion of thriving lives, economies, and communities. NASDOH supports the Healthy People 2020 definition of the social determinants of health: “conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.”<sup>3</sup> Health outcomes strongly relate to these upstream social determinants of health, which include a variety of non-medical factors like food access and nutrition, transportation, housing, incarceration and recidivism, jobs/wages, safety, education, and other community-based, and environmental conditions.



*We can generate far greater value for our investment on health by increasing our investment in community-level factors.*

### HEALTH IS MORE THAN HEALTH CARE.

America is a world leader in health care and medical research. Yet, while spending approximately \$3.0 trillion per year on health care—2.5 times the average of our industrialized peers—Americans have shorter lifespans and fare worse in many health indicators, including obesity and

diabetes, infant mortality, vaccination rates, and life expectancy.<sup>4</sup> A major reason for this inconsistency is that spending on social services is more closely related to positive outcomes across many basic health indicators than is spending on medical care.<sup>5</sup> The United States continues to concentrate funding and reform efforts on high-cost treatment efforts within the traditional health care delivery system, rather than investing in supporting the social and environmental infrastructure that prevents negative health outcomes. We can generate far greater value for our investment on health by increasing our investment in community-level factors.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Social Interventions Research & Evaluation Network (SIREN) Tools and Resources, at <https://sirenetwork.ucsf.edu/tools-resources/screening-tools>, accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Healthy People 2020 – Social Determinants of Health, at <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>, accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Squires, D. “U.S. Health Care from a Global Perspective.” The Commonwealth Fund, 8 October 2015. Available at <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2015/oct/us-health-care-global-perspective>.

<sup>5</sup> Bradley EH, Elkins BR, Herrin J, Elbel B, “Health and social services expenditures: associations with health outcomes.” *BMJ Qual Saf* 20(826-831), 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor LA, Tan AX, Coyle CE, Ndumele C, Rogan E, Canavan M, et al., “Leveraging the Social Determinants of Health: What Works?” *PLoS ONE* 11(8), 2016.

## HEALTH REQUIRES HEALTH-PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTS.

Variation in social spending combined with environmental and community factors has led to a situation where an individual's zip code is becoming a more accurate predictor of health than his/her genetic code. Further, current silos of federal spending programs in health and social services limit integration at the federal, state, and local level, and allow few opportunities for states to innovate in the delivery of federally-funded programs, including Medicaid. States

with a higher ratio of social to health spending have significantly better health outcomes in many areas, including adult obesity, diabetes, lung cancer, asthma, and heart disease.<sup>7</sup> Health-promoting environments influence behaviors consistent with healthy and productive lifestyles, and enable all of us to actively take steps that improve our own health and well-being and prevent costly and unnecessary visits to the emergency room, doctor's office, or hospital. When social needs and environmental stressors are appropriately addressed, it can make the difference between an acute health episode that results in a day or week of lost productivity and one that is exacerbated by non-medical factors and results in recurring medical needs and chronic loss of productivity. Improving America's health requires us to address how health care dollars can be invested in efforts to address social determinants of health.

*When social needs and environmental stressors are appropriately addressed, it can make the difference between an acute health episode that results in a day or week of lost productivity and one that is exacerbated by non-medical factors and results in recurring medical needs and chronic loss of productivity.*

## III. STRENGTH IN A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH: BUILDING A NATIONAL ALLIANCE

The success and sustainability of models of care that address social determinants of health will require national, collaborative leadership from the public and private sectors to create a vision, and model practical and scalable solutions that address shared challenges with appropriate community-specific application. **NASDOH** is a group of stakeholders working to systematically and pragmatically build a common understanding of the importance of addressing social needs as part of an overall approach to health improvement. NASDOH's mission is to make a material improvement in the health of individuals and communities and, through multi-sector partnerships within the national system of health, advance holistic, value-based, person-centered health care that can successfully impact the social determinants of health.



<sup>7</sup> Taylor LA, Tan AX, Coyle CE, Ndumele C, Rogan E, Canavan M, et al., "Leveraging the Social Determinants of Health: What Works?" PLoS ONE 11(8), 2016.

NASDOH brings together health care, public health and social services expertise, local community experience, community-convening competence, business and financial insight, technology innovation, data and analytics competencies, and policy and advocacy acumen to assess and address current regulatory frameworks, funding environments and opportunities, and practical challenges to implementing and sustaining social determinants of health efforts.

NASDOH provides a bridge among sectoral efforts by involving organizations across the national system of health and in engaging the business sector to articulate the cross-sector value proposition for addressing the social determinants of health. The group's focus is to advance public and private sector policy environments to support the advancement of the evidence base upon which work in the field can build, innovate, and be sustained.

The following principles guide NASDOH's work to advance gaps in the evidence, build upon promising practices, and drive a supportive policy environment:

#### **NASDOH Principles**

1. By addressing the **broad and interconnected array of factors that influence health** we can effectively help all individuals and communities to become and stay healthy, achieve well-being, and thrive economically.
2. Strategies that address the social determinants of health should be **developed with individuals and communities** and reflect their values, perspectives, and preferences.
3. Meaningfully impacting health and well-being requires **multi-sectoral partnerships** across the private and public sectors.
4. The **private sector**, including employers and businesses, has an integral role to play through private-sector action, policy work, engaging in public-private partnerships, and civic leadership.
5. **Public health departments and human and social services sectors** are essential partners in efforts to address the social determinants of health and will need significant financial and human capital investments.
6. Efforts to address the social determinants of health should **build upon existing gains in the health care system** including ensuring access to affordable, quality care.
7. Successfully **transforming to a value-based health care system** requires care and payment models that address the social determinants of health.
8. **Digital strategies** should be leveraged to transform and improve health and well-being including promoting bidirectional information flow with appropriate attention to privacy, proper use, and data security as a priority in data collection, sharing, and use.
9. **Measuring the impact** of social determinants of health interventions should balance the goals and interests of sectors and affected people and communities.
10. The substantial body of successful evidence-based approaches to better integrate social determinants of health approaches into the health system can inform immediate action; however, there is a continuing **need to experiment and build the evidence base**, and for policies that encourage the development of additional evidence.

## **IV. PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS FOR THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS**

NASDOH has begun work across five key areas of emphasis that clarify the current understanding of the issues, opportunities, and challenges for the health system as it seeks to address underlying social and environmental conditions that impact health. NASDOH also seeks to highlight opportunities to fill gaps in the evidence, to advance shared learnings from the field, and to inform public and private sector policy makers in their efforts to not only innovate, but also to create sustainable models for addressing the social determinants of health. Current focus areas include:

## PROMOTING A SUPPORTIVE POLICY ENVIRONMENT AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

An essential goal of policy makers is to promote thriving lives, economies, and communities, key to which is improving the health and vitality for all Americans. Public sector leaders must engage with private sector stakeholders to advance innovative public-private partnerships to address social determinants of health issues. They also must be open to forward-thinking solutions that have the potential to advance interventions addressing social determinants of health as a means of improving overall health and therefore potentially reducing health care costs in the future.

### Specific Objectives Include:

1. Support progress toward sustaining community-driven, self-articulated goals by creating policy recommendations to better align and integrate state, federal, and local resources, developing effective regulatory structures, and promoting supportive policies at the federal, state, and local level.
2. Encourage the private sector to adopt supportive policies governing their own practices, and to engage constructively in the advancement of public policies that address the social determinants of health.

## FRAMING THE ISSUE IN A WAY THAT PROMOTES ACTION.

Though there is a growing appreciation of the need to address the social determinants of health, NASDOH believes it is essential to establish and promote an understanding of the value proposition for the United States. Such an understanding will help to prioritize research, practice, and private/public sector policy efforts on the social determinants of health.

### Specific Objectives Include:

1. Establish and promote an understanding of the value proposition for the United States to prioritize the social determinants of health in a way that transcends partisanship, promotes inclusion of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders and partners, including the business community, and highlights the opportunity cost of inaction.
2. Assist stakeholders in developing and articulating the health and value proposition for alignment and incorporation of private sector resources.



## **ELEVATING SHARED LEARNINGS ACROSS COMMUNITIES.**

Decades of global work provide a strong foundation of evidence and models upon which to build social determinants of health programs and interventions. Yet, the evidence base for proven approaches is still evolving. For example, we are only beginning to rigorously evaluate interventions and policy approaches using methods like sophisticated simulation models. In addition to sharing learnings from research-based efforts, it will be essential for practice-based models in the field to share promising approaches and challenges as lessons are learned through model implementation. This increased transparency will accelerate the efforts around the social determinants of health.

### Specific Objectives Include:

1. Promote communication, collaboration, and synergies among existing and future efforts to address the social determinants of health.
2. Deploy process and competency-based support for community-level alliance formation that stratifies target populations, convenes key stakeholders, and aligns community resources.
3. Facilitate and provide a platform for aggregation, understanding, and shared learning from local efforts, data, and experience, including local assessments of social needs, policy barriers, operational gaps, and funding needs to support growth and creation of community-driven solutions.



## **LEVERAGING SHARED APPROACHES TO MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION.**

There is important work to be done around creating a value proposition for any intervention. While evidence linking improvements in social determinants to improved health outcomes is available, there is less evidence illustrating a meaningful change in health care expenditures. Integral to the creation of a value proposition is a common understanding of how to assess social and environmental challenges, which outcomes are most critical to an evaluation of an intervention, and how to measure these outcomes.

### Specific Objectives Include:

1. Align around a strategy to identifying the social needs of individuals and communities such as through assessment tools and other innovative and non-traditional methods.
2. Support the spread and scale of successful models by advancing a shared approach to measurement that creates alliance-wide feedback loops for accelerating improvement and assessing intervention impact.
3. Encourage identification of a set of meaningful, evidence-based metrics that will build the case for investing in social services and public health as a means to improve health and reduce unnecessary spending on medical care.

## ENCOURAGING DATA AND TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION.

Addressing the social determinants of health is enhanced by using digital navigation tools that allow health plans to improve service coordination between the health care system and the social service sector. Digital tools can support better collaboration and efficiency, which seems to achieve better outcomes for the populations served. These tools engage the community and help monitor and track improvements in health outcomes. Ultimately, digital platforms and tools can reduce inefficiencies. encourage integrated health care, improve care coordination, quality, safety, and efficiency, and reduce health disparities in targeted populations.

Specific Objectives Include:

1. Promote transparency of, access to, aggregation of, and integration and sharing of, appropriate data and technology across sectors to assess and address the social determinants of health at the individual and community level.
2. Harness creative leadership and business acumen to implement, assess, and advance innovative technology solutions.
3. Encourage and facilitate the development of analytic tools to support building a value proposition for the social determinants of health.

## V. THE WAY FORWARD

Collaboration across sectors to address the underlying social, policy, and environmental conditions that influence health presents an essential challenge and opportunity of the 21st century for the United States. NASDOH is catalyzing a national conversation that is helping to frame the understanding of the value proposition for addressing the social determinants of health of individuals and communities. In the coming months and years, NASDOH will continue to work in collaboration with others in the field to advance our high priority work areas. As described, this work will focus on five broad areas including: 1) promoting a supportive policy environment, 2) framing the issue in a way that promotes action, 3) sharing learnings, 4) guiding measurement and evaluation, and 5) encouraging data and technology innovation. We will ground our efforts in the ten guiding principles defined in this paper.

The drive to bring more value in health care is accelerating interest and collaboration in addressing the social determinants of health within the health care system. As health care organizations analyze their patient populations to better understand how to address the clinical needs of high-need, high-cost individuals, they are beginning to learn that many of the situations and circumstances that result in poor health outcomes are less clinical in nature and more frequently underlying social determinants of health. This interest in the health care-related social determinants of health is therefore a near term priority for NASDOH in all our work streams. Over time, we expect to broaden our focus beyond health care-related social determinants to advance a more supportive policy environment for social determinants of health efforts that not only address individual need, but change the context in which people live, learn, work, pray, and play at the community level.

We will focus our efforts on building consensus around private and public sector policy proposals and actions that will enhance not only innovation, but also sustainability of SDOH efforts that are improving health and well-being. In all our work, we will take an approach that leverages the best science and practical models built in the field with local expertise and, in collaboration with community leaders, creates a more seamless policy and funding foundation at the local, state, and national level.



**The success of value-based care** is dependent on attention to the social determinants of health.



Current silos of **federal** spending in health and social services impair **state, local, and private-sector innovation**.



**Public-private collaboration** will aid in the success, scaling, and sustainability of current SDOH pilot efforts.

# NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO IMPACT THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

## CONVENERS

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Governor Mike O. Leavitt

Karen DeSalvo, MD, MPH, MSc

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Cerner  
Centene  
GE Ventures  
Intermountain Healthcare

Kaiser Permanente  
National Partnership for Women and Families  
RWJBarnabas Health  
TAVHealth  
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## GENERAL MEMBERS

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March of Dimes  
Michigan Health Improvement Alliance  
New York Presbyterian  
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To learn more about NASDOH, its mission, members, and activity, please visit [www.nasdoh.org](http://www.nasdoh.org) or email [nasdoh@leavittpartners.com](mailto:nasdoh@leavittpartners.com)