Prescribing Parks & Nature for Communities with High-Rates of Chronic Disease

Public Health: Health and social disparities

1. High prevalence of physical inactivity, mental illness, and social isolation among the 7 million people in Bay Area. Parks and nature can prevent important chronic diseases. Reaching a significant proportion of the population is critical for public health and public parks.

2. Communities with poor health outcomes have low utilization of parks. Health officials and park leaders share goals of improving the environment and reaching underrepresented communities to promote wellness.

Healthcare System and Practices

3. At-risk populations: Many people with health issues visit their primary care provider; including adults with chronic disease, children and their parents, older adults, pregnant women. Park agencies can reach people with chronic and acute health problems and those with low-income through selected health systems.

4. Key health organizations: In most counties, low-income patients (e.g., insured by Medicaid) are cared for by only a few health organizations (e.g., Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC). By working with the county health department and a few nonprofit health organizations, park agencies could reach most low-income patients, including those with chronic disease.

5. Primary care visits are busy, particularly for complex patients: 12–20 minutes/visit (3-5 patients/hr) to address patient concerns, follow-up previous issues, screening questions, physical exam, tests, counseling, and prescriptions. Parks and nature-related counseling must be brief with clear added value.

6. Prescribing a community resource. “Fitness program” is the social need that the most (75%) physicians wish they could prescribe. Health education pamphlets and posters are not frequently changed in busy, under-resourced clinics serving low-income patients. Parks-related pamphlets, posters, and programs should be created such that they remain impactful for a long time, and not become outdated.

Public Health, Healthcare & Parks Co-Implementation

7. 6Cs: Collaboration and cross-sector contributions create commitment and change. Health leaders appreciate the opportunity to develop health interventions with park agencies.

8. Educate and empower communities (residents & patients) about physical and mental health benefits.
   - Physical – physical activity, obesity, cardiovascular, diabetes, Vitamin D, myopia, life expectancy
   - Mental – improve mood, stress, sense of wellness, depression, anxiety

9. Intervention through Parks and Health Collaboration:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Collaborations and Partnerships</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Health organizations</td>
<td>Clear, simple, and consistent</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Public health departments (county, state, federal)</td>
<td>• Consistency &amp; culturally-relevant park programs</td>
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<td>• Health insurance: County managed care health plans; privately insured</td>
<td>• Clinic poster and “prescription pamphlet”</td>
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<td>• Healthcare systems and hospitals</td>
<td>• Instructions for health organizations to distribute to health care providers</td>
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<td>• Medical societies &amp; non-profit organizations</td>
<td>• Instructions for clinics (copies, posting, updating materials) and healthcare providers (counseling)</td>
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<td>• Community-based organizations</td>
<td>• Medical groups, group practices</td>
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10. Evaluation for short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes is critical for program improvement and expansion. Parks prescriptions might improve: clinician practice (in screening/counseling for physical inactivity, mental illness, and social isolation), healthcare systems, park programs, patient behavior, and health outcomes.

For more tools to build a Park Prescription program, visit ParkRx.org
### Healthy People 2020

State & Counties have similar indicators:

- Postpartum and prenatal depression is 3–7 times more likely in women insured with Medicaid.

### The Community Guide
[www.thecommunityguide.org/pa](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa)

The Guide to Community Preventive Services is a free resource to help you choose programs and policies to improve health and prevent disease in your community.

### 10 Essential Public Health Services

### National Prevention Strategy

### Spectrum of Prevention:

### Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
This tool is adapted from
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by:
San Francisco Department of Public Health
UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland
Healthy Parks Healthy People: Bay Area