



The social determinants of health are the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, and the systems in place to address illness. Improving a population's health status requires addressing these social factors.

What determines the health of a population?

Only twenty-five percent of a population's overall health is explained by genetics, biology, and health behaviors, such as eating and smoking habits. **Seventy-five percent** is determined by economic and social conditions. These include:

- **Safe housing**
- Social supports
- Income and employment opportunities
- Access to health care and insurance
- Food security
- Education
- Early childhood development

*What do physicians say about the impact of social conditions on health?**

85% say unmet social needs directly lead to worse health.

85% say addressing social needs is as important as addressing medical needs.

76% wish the health care system covered the costs of social services that are important to their patients' overall health.

The Triple Aim of health care reform

Improve the health care system by:

- Improving the experience of care
- Reducing per capita costs of health care
- Improving population health

To accomplish the Triple Aim, Washington State must address social determinants of health in its implementation of health care reform.

Addressing the social determinants of health

Building Changes and its housing and social service partners can help Washington State meet the Triple Aim by:

- Connecting health care reform to efforts to prevent and address issues of homelessness
- Identifying new opportunities for coordination in low-income communities
- Better understanding the relationship between income, housing, and health status

Housing and service providers will be relied upon to:

- Collaborate with health care providers
- Identify care continuum gaps
- Avoid duplication of medical, behavioral, or social services
- Consider health outcomes at the population level as well as individual client level

Helpful links

For more information, see two issue briefs prepared by Leavitt Partners for Building Changes:

“The Affordable Care Act Implementation and Family Homelessness”

<http://www.buildingchanges.org/library-topic/health-care>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

“Social Determinants of Health Frequently Asked Questions”

<http://cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/FAQ.html>

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:

“Exploring the Social Determinants of Health: Housing and Health”

http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70451

*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:

“Health Care’s Blind Side: The Overlooked Connection between Social Needs and Good Health”

<http://www.rwjf.org/en/research-publications/find-rwjf-research/2011/12/health-care-s-blind-side.html>

World Health Organization:

“Social determinants of health: Key Concepts”

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/final_report/key_concepts_en.pdf