



Foreword

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As Surgeon General, I am privileged to serve as “America’s Doctor,” overseeing the operations of the U.S. Public Health Service and providing Americans with the best scientific information available on how to improve their health and reduce the risk of illness and injury.

In this capacity, and from my many years of family practice, I am convinced that Americans need to live and work in environments where they can practice healthy behaviors and obtain quality medical care. Social, cultural, physical, and economic foundations are important factors in the overall health of the community. We must use our resources to increase availability of healthy foods, ensure that neighborhoods have safe places for physical activity, and provide access to affordable, high-quality medical services.

Creating these healthy environments for people of all ages will require their active involvement in grassroots efforts. Private citizens, community leaders, health professionals, and researchers will need to work together to make the changes that will allow such environments to flourish.

Across the United States, coalitions are working together to create change, and we are already seeing results. The most effective collaborations include representation from various sectors—businesses, clinicians, schools, academia, government, and the faith-based community.

This work is not easy, but it is essential. When *Principles of Community Engagement* was first published in 1997, it filled an important vacuum, providing community members, health professionals, and researchers with clear principles to guide and assess their collaborative efforts. The need for such guidance has not lessened in the subsequent years. Our health challenges continue. Support for collaborative work has grown, but with this growing support has come an increasing volume and diversity of initiatives, terminology, approaches, and literature.

This new edition of *Principles* adheres to the same key principles laid out in the original booklet. It distills critical messages from the growing body of information and commentary on this topic. At the same time, it provides more

detailed practical information about the application of the principles, and it responds to changes in our larger social context, including the increasing use of “virtual communities” and the growing interest in community-engaged health research.

As we continue to try to improve our nation’s health, we must work together and keep in mind the community contexts that shape our health and well-being.

This is the charge and the challenge laid out in these pages.

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