

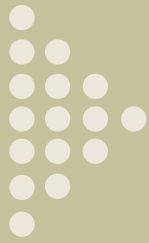


**PRC**

**HEALTHY AGING RESEARCH NETWORK  
PUTTING COLLECTIVE WISDOM TO WORK  
FOR OLDER AMERICANS**

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Division of Adult and Community Health





**This booklet describes the structure and mission of the CDC Healthy Aging Research Network (HAN) and presents selected network accomplishments. The HAN is a thematic network of CDC's Prevention Research Centers (PRC) Program and is funded by CDC's Healthy Aging Program.**



# About the Healthy Aging Research Network

Since 2001, the CDC Healthy Aging Research Network (HAN) has used a coordinated approach to develop, test, and share the best strategies for keeping older adults healthy in body, mind, and spirit. The HAN comprises members of Prevention Research Centers and an affiliate in locations throughout the country. The network works with national and local partners to support healthy aging.

One of the HAN's strengths is its ability to identify and coordinate the diverse perspectives and resources of its members, who are experts in public health and related fields. Participation in the HAN helps researchers enhance their focus on healthy aging and find new ways to collaborate on projects that expand their capacity to address community needs.

The HAN works closely with CDC's Healthy Aging Program, which provides the HAN's core funding. The partners ensure that promising research findings translate to healthy, high-quality lives for older Americans.

## Network activities

- ▮ Implement interventions that promote good health in older adults ..... Pages 4, 7
- ▮ Provide useful information and resources to community decision-makers ..... Pages 4, 9
- ▮ Develop practical and effective tools for assessing and evaluating programs and policies ..... Pages 5, 9, 10
- ▮ Summarize and disseminate findings to colleagues across multiple sectors and communities ..... Pages 5, 8, 10, 11
- ▮ Mentor and train public health practitioners ..... Pages 7, 8, 9, 11
- ▮ Inform research priorities..... Page 8
- ▮ Provide access to experts in healthy aging ..... Pages 7, 8

*“The HAN is a talented team whose collaborative spirit and innovation are making a long-lasting impact at the intersection of public health and aging.”*

— Basia Belza, PhD, RN, FAAN, Lead, Coordinating Center, HAN





## Focus areas

- ▶ Promote regular physical activity
- ▶ Address mental health
- ▶ Support the development of health-promoting environments and policies
- ▶ Manage chronic disease
- ▶ Disseminate research findings and effective interventions and programs

## Helping Older Americans Stay Healthy and Active

The potential impact of the HAN's work is substantial, given the aging U.S. population. By 2030, one in every five Americans will be age 65 or older. As people age, their risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, and cognitive impairment increases, as does their risk for injury from falling.

To address these and other risks, the HAN conducts activities to help older adults retain their health and independence, while avoiding disease and injury. For older adults with chronic disease, the HAN focuses on helping them effectively manage their disease and avoid complications.

## Member and Partner Organizations

The HAN works with numerous partners, including federal agencies, state and local governments, national organizations, and local organizations in communities across the country. Together, the partners expand capacity and expertise, help leverage resources, tackle emerging issues, and enhance the dissemination and sustainability of HAN projects.

### Selected partners

- ▶ CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity
- ▶ AARP (*formerly American Association of Retired Persons*)
- ▶ Administration on Aging
- ▶ Alzheimer's Association
- ▶ American Medical Association
- ▶ Easter Seals
- ▶ Environmental Protection Agency
- ▶ Health Foundation of South Florida
- ▶ National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
- ▶ National Council on Aging

*"The HAN is unique in its ability to integrate research on policy, community, and programmatic interventions—thus ensuring the greatest benefit for older adults, especially those affected by health disparities."*

— Nancy Whitelaw, PhD, National Center on Aging, HAN Partner

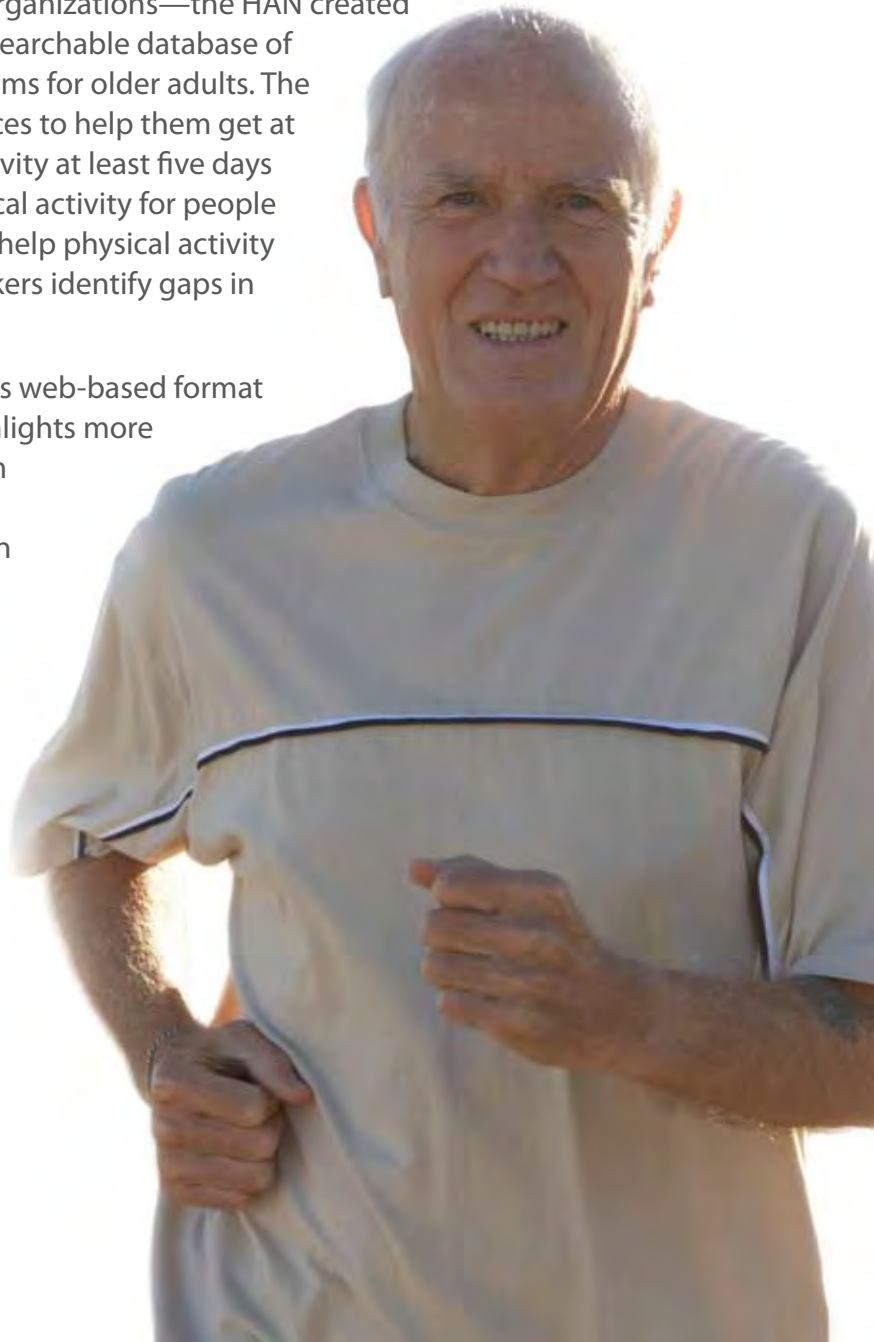
# Securing the Essentials for Healthy Aging

## Promote Regular Physical Activity

Staying active can help older people maintain a healthy weight, remain strong and mobile, and avoid depression. The HAN studies the determinants of physical activity for older adults, determines the best ways to communicate the benefits of physical activity in this population, and identifies factors, including access to formal programs, that facilitate or hinder participation in physical activity.

### Highlights

- Beginning in 2002, HAN researchers developed and conducted a survey of physical activity programs in seven communities across the country. Then with support from CDC, the National Council on Aging, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation—and in partnership with several national organizations—the HAN created Active Options, a web-based locator and searchable database of community-based physical activity programs for older adults. The tool can help older Americans find resources to help them get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days a week, a recommended amount of physical activity for people in this age group. Active Options also can help physical activity programmers, researchers, and policy makers identify gaps in physical activity programming.
- Active Options is regularly updated, and its web-based format gives users easy access. The database highlights more than 1,150 physical activity programs from communities across 13 states, and some communities earn national attention when they put these resources to work. In east-central Texas, for example, Active Options guided local leaders in the state's Brazos Valley region as they increased physical activity programming for older adults. In 2007, the region received an award, Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging, which is given to communities that demonstrate support for "active aging" policies as part of their growth and development. The HAN is working to help other communities access Active Options and use it to plan local physical activity promotion.



▣ In 2007, the HAN conducted the first in a series of symposiums, “Effective Community-Based Physical Activity Programs for Older Adults, From Research to Practice.” The symposium spotlighted effective programs in communities around the country. More than 160 researchers and service providers from 28 states and several countries heard the latest scientific findings about developing and delivering such programs, and they learned to apply the RE-AIM framework,<sup>1</sup> a systematic approach for institutionalizing effective interventions. Subsequently, a monograph—*Moving Ahead: Strategies and Tools to Plan, Conduct, and Maintain Effective Community-Based Physical Activity Programs for Older Adults*—was produced and distributed to thousands of recipients (based on downloads from multiple web sites and distribution at major conferences). The publication presented proceedings of the symposium as well as new strategies, practical ideas, and helpful tools for practitioners to use in their work on behalf of older adults. The HAN also developed an issue brief describing the RE-AIM framework and its application.

*By 2030, one in every five Americans will be age 65 or older.*







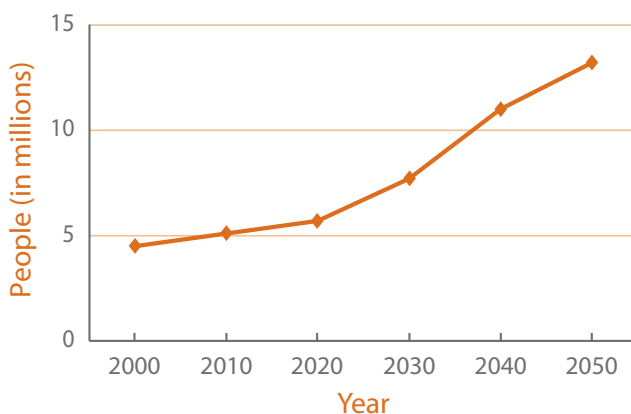
## Address Mental Health

In 2009, 35% of older adults reported dealing with disability and 7% reported experiencing frequent mental distress.<sup>2</sup> Depression is an illness—not a natural or inevitable part of aging. In most communities, the depression rate ranges from less than 1% to about 5% in people age 65 or older.<sup>3</sup> However, the rate rises to about 12% in older hospital patients and 14% in older people requiring home health care.<sup>3</sup>

Cognition is a combination of mental processes that includes the ability to learn new things; to remember; and to use intuition, judgment, and language. Older adults experiencing cognitive decline may be unable to care for themselves or conduct activities—such as meal preparation and money management—necessary to independent living. An inability to manage medications and medical conditions are of particular concern when a person has cognitive decline or dementia. More than 5 million Americans have Alzheimer’s disease, the most common type of dementia among older adults, and experts say that number could nearly triple over the next several decades.<sup>4</sup>

The HAN works with national partners to raise awareness about emotional and cognitive health and to prevent or mitigate the effects of depression in older adults.

**Estimated number of U.S. adults aged 65 years or older who have Alzheimer’s disease<sup>4</sup>**





## Highlights

- The Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives for Seniors (PEARLS) was developed and tested from 1999 to 2003 at the University of Washington PRC. PEARLS provides in-home, brief counseling sessions that effectively treat depression in frail, isolated older adults. It is included in the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and on the Innovation Exchange of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The HAN supports dissemination of PEARLS and provides technical assistance to PEARLS programs around the country. The HAN also conducts translational research to improve the implementation and dissemination of PEARLS and other evidence-based programs, which can help educate providers of aging services and others who may find these programs useful.
- Since 2005, the HAN has been collaborating with CDC's Healthy Aging Program as well as many partners, such as the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, and the Task Force on Community Preventive Services to conduct a series of evidence-based reviews on depression, emotional health and well-being, cognitive health and physical activity, and cognitive impairment and co-occurring chronic conditions in older adults. HAN members and other national experts participated on panels that systematically identified and evaluated each of the review topics in terms of community-based strategies or the state of the science. On the basis of this work, the task force made recommendations<sup>5</sup> about preventing depression in older adults. These recommendations are disseminated through presentations and publications. The HAN continues to serve as a resource for these topics.



Working with CDC's Healthy Aging Program, the HAN conducted a symposium in 2008 to equip professionals in public health, aging services, and mental health with effective strategies for depression screening and treatment for older adults. Held at the Carter Center in Atlanta, the symposium was conducted in collaboration with the Rosalynn Carter Georgia Mental Health Forum, during which former First Lady Rosalynn Carter expressed her appreciation of and support for CDC's efforts in mental health. More than 200 participants from community agencies in 31 states heard national experts in research, clinical practice, and program development and implementation present the latest scientific evidence on depression screening and treatment, and describe effective strategies and programs to reach community-based older adults at increased risk for depression. Three community-based agencies received post-symposium technical assistance, and more than 10,000 action briefs were distributed describing evidence-based depression screening and treatment programs and related implementation strategies.

In 2005, CDC and partners established The Healthy Brain Initiative, a component of CDC's Healthy Aging Program. The HAN helps The Healthy Brain Initiative promote cognitive health through its coordinated research projects and collaboration with HAN members and partners such as the Alzheimer's Association.



HAN researchers assessed how diverse groups of older adults understand cognitive health and which health promotion approaches related to cognitive health may have broad public appeal. The HAN also examined caregivers' and health care providers' perceptions of cognitive health. By understanding perceptions and beliefs, stakeholders can develop effective strategies for speaking about cognitive health and associated risk factors. Findings were published in a 2009 special issue of *The Gerontologist* and they are being used in developing national surveys of health care providers and the general public.

*"I am bringing home a suitcase of hope!"*

— Physician from Oregon attending the symposium, "Effective Programs to Treat Depression in Older Adults: Implementation Strategies for Community Agencies," an event coordinated by the HAN and its partners



## Support Development of Healthy Environments and Policies

Physical and social activities can help promote health and well-being among older adults. However, many communities lack sidewalks, recreational spaces, and public transportation, thus creating challenges for older adults who want to remain active and independent. The HAN works with state and local governments to find effective and affordable approaches to improving communities' support of healthy and independent living.

### Highlights

In 2009, the HAN, with support from CDC and other partners, sponsored the symposium, "Promoting Environmental and Policy Change to Promote Healthy Aging." More than 150 practitioners, academicians, advocates for livable communities, and professionals in business, planning, engineering, and recreation attended. The success of the symposium facilitated support for the development of an Environmental and Policy Change clearinghouse, a web-based, searchable database of tools, case studies, and other resources on topics such as walkability, livable communities, transportation, older pedestrians and drivers, universal design, and rural community issues. In 2011, the clearinghouse received an Award for Publication Excellence, sponsored by a bimonthly communications newsletter. From January to July 2011, the site received more than 4,000 page views.

The HAN developed four action briefs on the following topics:

Innovations in community development

Frameworks to guide change

Transportation and mobility

Healthy home environments

The web-based versions of these briefs have received thousands of page views.





## Manage Chronic Disease

At least 80% of older Americans live with one chronic condition, and 50% have two or more.<sup>3</sup> More than 30% of Americans aged 60 to 69 are obese<sup>6</sup>; more than 64% of men aged 65 to 74 and more than 70% of women in this age group have hypertension.<sup>7</sup> Twenty-seven percent of adults aged 65 and older have diabetes.<sup>8</sup> These conditions can increase risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, disability, loss of independence, and decline in quality of life.<sup>9,10</sup> The HAN develops information and skill-building materials that stakeholders can use to address chronic disease risks.

### Highlights

In an ongoing collaboration, HAN members have been working with the National Council on Aging on a series of online educational modules about providing evidence-based programs for older adults. These modules are being used in 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, where service providers receive support from the Administration on Aging to deliver such programs.

#### The modules address the following issues and topics:

Translating evidence-based health promotion into practice using the RE-AIM framework<sup>1</sup> (5 modules using the effective Chronic Disease Self-Management Program as a case example)

Making effective presentations to partners using program data (3 modules: designing slides and delivering talks, effective presentations, and conveying program data)

Making the business case to sustain programs and developing quality assurance plans that are guided by the RE-AIM framework (2 modules: making a business plan and advanced management techniques)

Six action briefs were developed on enhancing partnerships, examining model programs, recruiting participants, and maintaining participation of older adults in evidence-based programs. These materials and tools were posted on the National Council on Aging's technical assistance center web site and were distributed broadly through the aging services and public health services networks. This work is just one example of hundreds of hours of technical assistance and education provided by HAN members to aging services providers and public health professionals nationwide over the past decade.



## Disseminate Research Findings and Effective Interventions and Programs

The HAN helps researchers and communities in the PRC network communicate their findings and products to interested users. Through relationships with national and local partners, the HAN demonstrates a multifaceted dissemination strategy:

Support professional conferences and events

Maintain web-based databases

Contribute to the professional literature

The HAN has been responsible for more than 100 print and web-based products and presentations.



### Highlights

Item	Number
Scientific journal articles and chapters	48
Special journal issues	3
Books	1
Issue briefs or action briefs	16
National conferences	3
Reports or monographs	3
Interactive health promotion learning modules	8
Webinars and pre-recorded presentations	16
Tools (action guides, toolkits, web sites; Community Guide recommendations)	16
Scholarships for conference programs	65



# HAN Members

The HAN comprises member centers and affiliates that share the goals of understanding the determinants of healthy aging, identifying and promoting healthy aging, and assisting in translational efforts.

## **University of California at Berkeley: Center for Family and Community Health** [1]

*Healthy Aging Focus:* Enhancing health promotion research and practice for older adults in the areas of physical activity, depression, and brain health.

## **University of Colorado Denver: Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center** [2]

*Healthy Aging Focus:* Working with senior services and community members in the San Luis Valley to help older adults live independently.

## **University of Illinois at Chicago: Institute for Health Research and Policy** [3]

*Healthy Aging Focus:* Providing technical assistance and evaluation for physical activity programs in Cook County. Participating in an initiative to provide secondary prevention strategies for people with Alzheimer's disease.

## **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention** [4]

*Healthy Aging Focus:* Building statewide coalitions to promote policy and infrastructure designed to prevent falls and fall-related injuries.

## **University of Pittsburgh: Center for Aging and Population Health** [5]

*Healthy Aging Focus:* Promoting falls prevention as well as the "10 Keys of Healthy Aging": stop smoking; control blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar; get cancer screenings, adequate physical activity, and timely immunizations; have meaningful social involvement; and avoid depression and the weakening of bones and muscles.

## **University of South Carolina: Prevention Research Center** [6]

*Healthy Aging Focus:* Providing technical assistance and evaluation for the state's "Better Choices, Better Health" program to help older adults manage chronic diseases.

## **Texas A&M Health Science Center: Center for Community Health Development** [7]

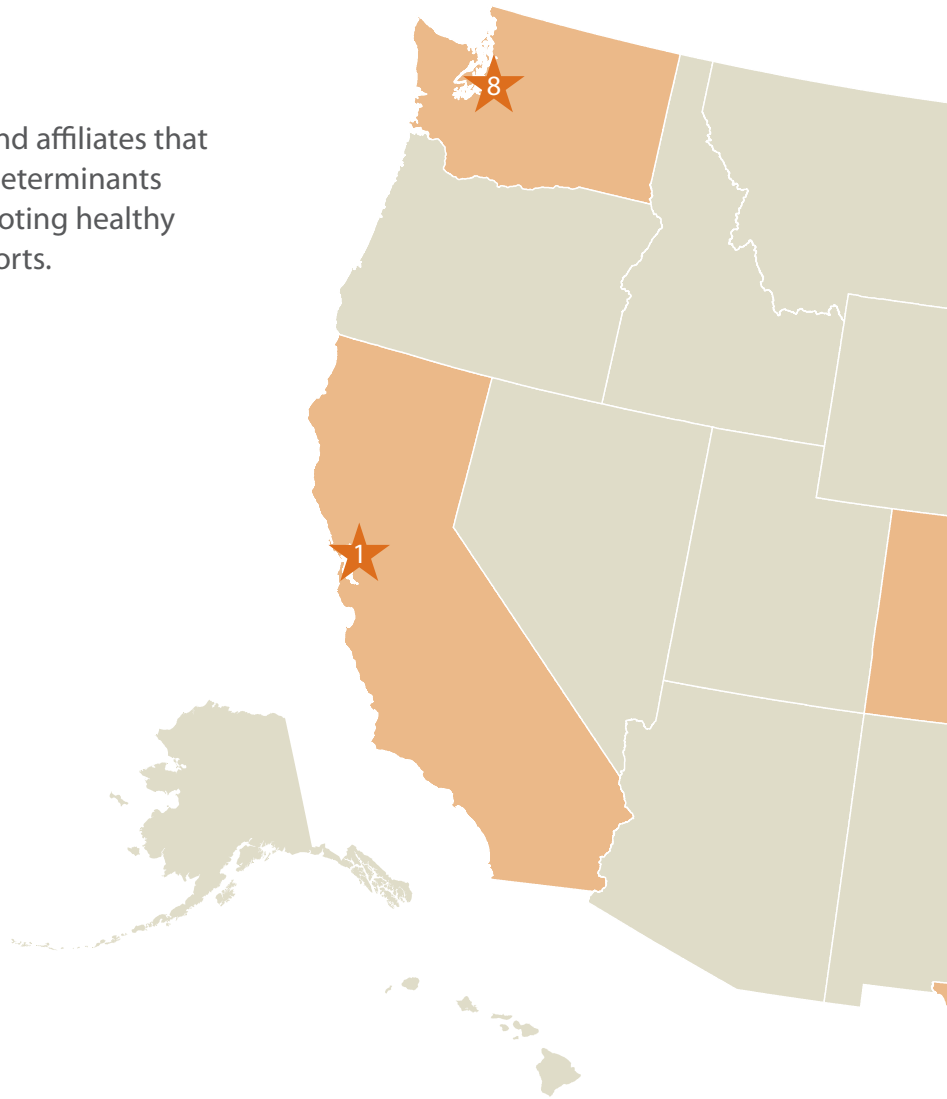
*Healthy Aging Focus:* Providing technical assistance for the state's "A Matter of Balance" program to help seniors in the Brazos Valley and Bexar County adopt practical strategies that reduce falls and increase activity levels. HAN-affiliated staff also serve on a board that advises the Texas Department of Agriculture about increasing access to healthy foods.

## **University of Washington: Health Promotion Research Center** [8]

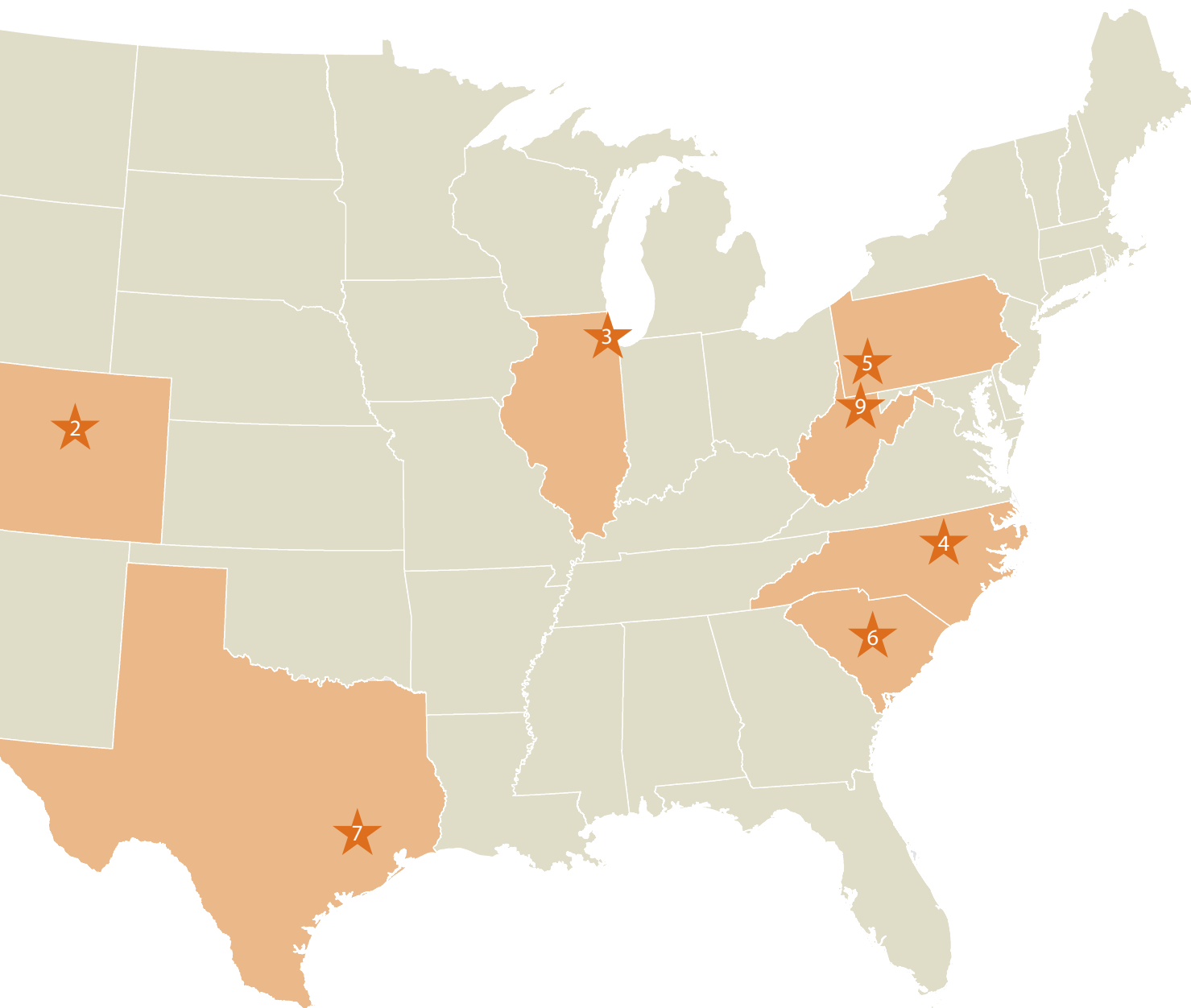
*Healthy Aging Focus:* Conducting community-based dissemination research to promote the health and well-being of middle-aged and older adults, particularly those with low income and members of ethnic or cultural groups at increased risk of chronic disease. The center's core areas of focus are cancer prevention, depression management, falls prevention, physical activity, and workplace health promotion.

## **West Virginia University: Prevention Research Center** [9]

*Healthy Aging Focus:* Providing technical and programmatic assistance to state and county health departments to help older adults in rural communities manage chronic diseases and improve fitness.







## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Find information about the RE-AIM planning tool here: <http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/IS/ream/pdf/PlanningTool.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The State of Aging and Health in America Report. [Internet] 2009 [Accessed 2011 September 1]. Available from <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/SAHA/Default/ReportDetail.aspx?State=US>
- <sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Depression is not a normal part of growing older. [Internet] 2009. [Accessed 2011 August 31]. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/aging/mentalhealth/depression.htm>
- <sup>4</sup> Hebert LE, Scherr PA, Bienias JL, Bennett DA, Evans, DA. Alzheimer's disease in the U.S. population: Prevalence estimates using the 2000 Census. *Archives of Neurology* 2003;60(8):1119-1122; as published by the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, 2011.
- <sup>5</sup> The recommendations can be found here: <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/mentalhealth/depression-oa.html> and <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/mentalhealth/depression-home.html>
- <sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Vital signs: state-specific obesity prevalence among adults—United States, 2009. August 6, 2010. 59(30):951-955.
- <sup>7</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. Health, United States, 2008. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics; 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National diabetes fact sheet: national estimates and general information on diabetes and prediabetes in the United States, 2011. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011.
- <sup>9</sup> American Heart Association. Why blood pressure matters. [Internet] 2011 [Accessed 2011 September 1]. Available from [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/WhyBloodPressureMatters/Why-Blood-Pressure-Matters\\_UCM\\_002051\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/WhyBloodPressureMatters/Why-Blood-Pressure-Matters_UCM_002051_Article.jsp)
- <sup>10</sup> American Heart Association. Why diabetes matters. [Internet] 2010 [Accessed 2011 September 1]. Available from [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Diabetes/WhyDiabetesMatters/Why-Diabetes-Matters\\_UCM\\_002033\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Diabetes/WhyDiabetesMatters/Why-Diabetes-Matters_UCM_002033_Article.jsp)



*Healthier Communities Together*

For the most up-to-date information on what the HAN is doing to promote healthy aging, see  
<http://cdc.gov/aging> and <http://www.prc-han.org/>.

For information about the Prevention Research Centers, see the program's web site at  
<http://www.cdc.gov/prc/>, or please contact:

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