



## **Women In Government Heart Disease Task Force State Policy Recommendations**

*The following policy recommendations were developed by Women In Government's Heart Disease Task Force and approved by the Board of Directors. The Task Force was first formed in 2007, and consists of a national, bipartisan group of state legislators.*

### ***Task Force Mission Statement***

The mission of the Heart Disease Task Force is to reduce the impact of Cardiovascular Disease through promoting awareness, implementing prevention and early intervention strategies based on established medical guidelines, facilitating partnerships, sharing best practices and developing a state action plan.

### ***Serve as a Role Model/Leadership***

State policymakers and other stakeholders should serve as individual role models for a heart healthy lifestyle and encourage staff, colleagues, and constituents to do the same. State policymakers should use their leadership positions to take action to reduce the burden of heart disease, which can be achieved by establishing dialogue with relevant state agencies, community organizations, and members of the medical community, etc. Policymakers should establish community roundtables/committees to address heart disease prevention opportunities in their districts.

### ***Support Coverage for Preventive Health Services***

States should support coverage of preventive health services through public and private insurance providers. States should also support incentives, such as tax credits, for employers to adopt insurance plans with prevention services, provide benefits for healthy heart living, incorporate heart-healthy programs in the workplace, etc.

### ***Collaboration of Stakeholders***

A comprehensive approach to expand evidence-based heart health services includes the collaboration of federal, state, and local agencies and policymakers, and the involvement of the entire community. A myriad of stakeholders should be engaged in outreach efforts such as consumers and their families, faith-based institutions, hospitals, healthcare professionals, the private sector, including businesses, insurance providers and the healthcare industry, chambers of commerce, the media, educational systems, and nonprofit organizations. States should engage these partners and form task forces or other proactive accountable entities to address strategies and opportunities to reduce the burden of heart disease.

### ***Reducing & Eliminating Cardiovascular Disease Disparities***

States should develop programs and policies to increase awareness of cardiovascular disease and decrease racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic and geographic disparities. For example, states could provide free screenings and nutritional counseling in underserved communities, develop culturally sensitive health materials, review medical school curriculum to include a focus on women and minorities, and offer incentives for underrepresented populations to enter healthcare professions. States should educate healthcare professionals about disparities and develop data collection and surveillance systems.

### ***Increasing Utilization of Medicare Preventive Services Among Seniors***

States should initiate educational campaigns informing eligible seniors of the preventive services available to them through Medicare. For example, policymakers can engage Departments of Aging, Health, and other agencies, to convene community meetings, target areas where seniors frequent with information about prevention, and create senior-friendly and culturally competent materials. Furthermore, stakeholders should develop newsletters for the general public about Medicare preventive services, and offer transportation options or mobile healthcare units to make preventive services accessible. Finally, states should develop strategies to expand prevention programs to reach seniors in their homes and to provide support to caregivers and home health aides. States should seek to optimize existing partnerships and seek out public, private and non-profit organizations with mutual interest to achieve shared goals.

### ***Women and Cardiovascular Disease***

States should develop awareness campaigns to educate the public and other stakeholders about heart disease issues for women, including warning signs and preventive steps they can take to protect their health. Healthcare professionals should be encouraged to learn how to diagnose and treat the unique heart disease risk factors and symptoms women face. State policymakers should consider engaging their political and/or women's caucuses to address heart disease in women.