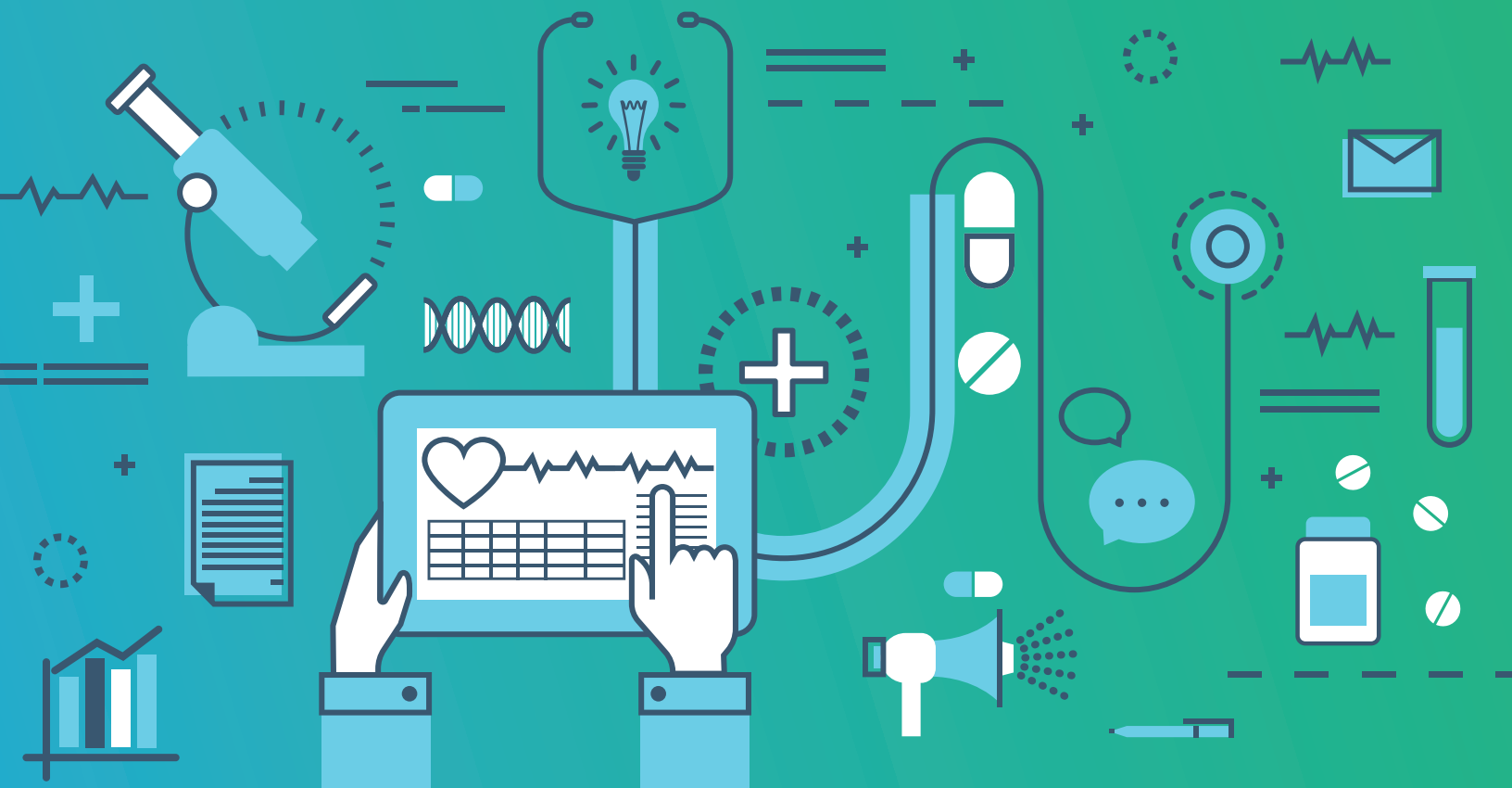


IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR

# Engaging Health Care Providers (HCPs) in Referrals

to the National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) Lifestyle Change Program



NATIONAL  
**DIABETES**  
**PREVENTION**  
PROGRAM



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## INTRODUCTION

This guide will help your organization engage health care providers (HCPs) in referring patients at risk for type 2 diabetes to the National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) lifestyle change program.

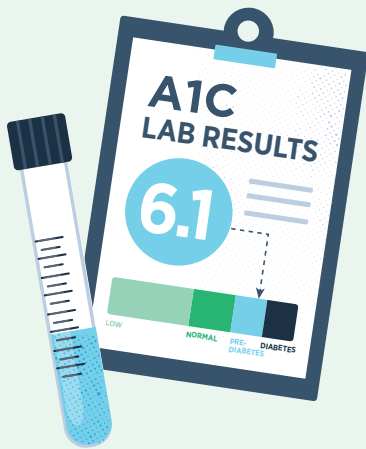
One common challenge with enrolling people in the program is that few people know about the National DPP lifestyle change program and its effectiveness in preventing or delaying the onset of type 2 diabetes. This is true even among HCPs.

In this guide, you will find resources for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-recognized organizations offering the National DPP lifestyle change program. Each template is customizable to allow your organization to tailor the content.



**1** IN **3**  
**PEOPLE HAVE  
PREDIABETES**

## IMPORTANCE OF HCPS IN PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND PROGRAM ENROLLMENT



Health care providers have significant influence over their patients when it comes to decisions about their personal health. This influence, combined with the fact that HCPs are the ones who diagnose prediabetes, makes HCPs vital allies in efforts to encourage participation in the National DPP lifestyle change program.

However, engaging HCPs in program referrals can be difficult. They have limited time with patients, often need to address multiple health issues during a patient visit, and may already receive numerous health messages to share with patients. HCPs encompass a wide variety of provider types, each of whom plays an important and unique role in providing patient care and influencing healthy behaviors. Furthermore, providers are unique individuals, each with their own level of knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about prediabetes and your program. Some of these may be negative, and all of them need to be taken into account when conducting outreach. With so much to take into consideration, it can be confusing and overwhelming to know whom to target and how.

This guide can help you prioritize your outreach efforts and engage HCPs with information about prediabetes and your organization's lifestyle change program in a concise, efficient way that makes it easy for them to refer their eligible patients. It contains step-by-step guidance on conducting outreach to HCPs, along with easy-to-use materials for HCPs and patients.

# Suggestions for Engaging HCPs in Participant Referrals

Reaching out to HCPs may be more effective when using a two-pronged approach: 1) engaging individual HCPs through personal outreach, and 2) encouraging referrals through professional organizations and other entities with whom HCPs interact or from whom they routinely receive information.

## Steps to Engage HCPs Individually

One of the most effective methods for encouraging HCPs to refer patients to your program is developing relationships with them, initiated with a phone call or face-to-face meeting. HCPs are diverse in terms of practice size, areas of expertise, involvement in professional associations, preferred methods of communication, and size of staff—to name a few. Each of these factors can affect the approach you should take to successfully make contact and share information with HCPs. The steps that follow will guide you in identifying and engaging HCPs in your community

### 1 Research local HCPs and make a prioritized list for outreach

You may wish to use the Sample Outreach Tracker in the **Resources Toolkit** to create your list and capture information throughout the outreach process. Start with the providers you or your

partners know. A referral from a colleague, friend, or staff member can go a long way in securing a meeting. It is also good to focus first on practices that are likely to care for patients with prediabetes, or have a large volume of high-risk patients or patients who are eligible for the National DPP lifestyle change program. Primary care and family physicians can be a good place to start. If applicable, it may also be useful to begin with providers in your health system.

Make a list of HCPs you would like to engage. While physicians may seem like the obvious providers to engage, they are often overwhelmed with health messages and responsibilities related to managing their practices and, thus, may be harder to reach. Other HCPs in a practice may spend more time with patients per visit and may be more receptive to meeting with you. Research has shown that reaching out to other HCP office staff (when available) can help overcome barriers to engaging HCPs in patient referrals. These HCPs tend to have many opportunities to interact with and influence patients diagnosed with prediabetes or otherwise at risk for type 2 diabetes. If you have primary care practices in your community that employ nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and/or community health workers, we recommend starting outreach with those providers to maximize impact.

It is also helpful to look beyond primary care practices. Consider contacting other relevant practitioners, such as those in family practice, internal medicine, and gynecology, or specialists associated with prediabetes risks such as pharmacists, dietitians, and dentists.

## TAILORING INFORMATION FOR HCPs AND ADDRESSING NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

*While most HCPs will have adequate knowledge of prediabetes and the importance of diagnosis and treatment, you may encounter some with misconceptions or negative attitudes. Some of the most common are that diagnosing prediabetes serves to “medicalize” the condition or alarm patients unnecessarily. When speaking to HCPs with these views, it is important to acknowledge their concerns and provide clear and accurate information to address them. For example, try emphasizing that studies have shown that the National DPP lifestyle change program is more effective than prescribing metformin in preventing or delaying type 2 diabetes. A referral to the lifestyle change program is like a prescription without side effects! What’s more, when HCPs tell their patients about the program, they are arming them with information so they can take action to improve their health and lower their risk for type 2 diabetes.*

## 2 Reach out to HCPs to set up brief calls or meetings

Once you have identified the HCPs with whom you would like to connect, create a call script or letter to use to contact each provider. The **Resources Toolkit** includes a phone script, letter, and email to use as a template and customize to fit your program. After you make initial contact, be sure to follow up with each provider within a week and be timely with sending any additional information they may request.

Don’t get discouraged if your calls or letters aren’t answered right away. Gatekeepers are there to protect the providers’ time. Correspondence often gets filed or discarded, and calls get screened if they sound like a sales pitch. Be genuine and persistent. You may find it helps to engage front office staff in person to help you set up meetings and explain what you would like to discuss (the **Resources Toolkit** includes specific materials for them). As noted earlier, an introduction from a trusted source could help get you in the door, so consider any helpful connections you may have to an HCP

## 3 Discuss the program with HCPs

Next, set up short, productive calls or meetings with the HCPs on your list. Be mindful of the limited time that HCPs have outside of their patient and practice duties. When asking to set up a call or meeting, shoot for 10 minutes at the HCP’s convenience

Timing is everything. Consider scheduling meetings at times that are less busy—such as early morning before patients arrive, just after lunch, or at the end of the day. Also, be mindful of the season and the health of your community. Stopping by an HCP’s office during a flu outbreak will not give you the results you seek. The best times to schedule a meeting with an HCP may be at a season’s end. For



example, June and July are after spring allergy season and before the fall back-to-school season. At these times, HCPs may be looking for new, updated materials and information to share with patients and colleagues, so they may be more willing to use your program materials.

Keep these tips in mind during your initial discussion with an HCP:

- Due to HCPs' busy schedules, you may get less time with them than you had hoped, or you may meet with other staff. Be prepared to speak concisely about the National DPP lifestyle change program (refer to the talking points in the **Resources Toolkit** for assistance) and be sure to bring printed materials with you to leave behind for other HCPs.
- Put your key messages in a short cover letter, handwritten note, or even a sticky note on top of the packet of materials. Be sure to include your name and phone number. If your appointment gets cancelled, you can leave your materials and messages behind for the HCP to read later
- Let the HCP know specifically what you are asking him or her to do such as refer their patients at risk for type 2 diabetes to your program. And, be sure to give them multiple copies of the patient referral form in the **Resources Toolkit** with your contact information.
- Be sure to say, "Thank you." It seems so obvious, but it means so much.

## ADDRESSING CONCERNS

This table provides suggestions for addressing specific HCP concerns that may come up in your conversations.

If an HCP Thinks This...	Try Saying This...
The lifestyle change program is too long. It is easier to give my patients educational materials or to promote shorter-term behavioral interventions.	Beyond the strong <u>evidence base</u> backing the National DPP, participation in the lifestyle change program was shown to have a <u>dose-response relationship</u> , meaning that the more sessions a participant completed, the better weight loss outcomes they achieved. Weight loss correlates strongly with type 2 diabetes risk reduction. This shows the benefit to promoting this longer-term lifestyle intervention to your patients.
I don't think my patients are motivated enough to stick with a year-long program.	CDC is using information on participant retention, program evaluation data, and feedback from CDC-recognized organizations to improve program delivery and strengthen Lifestyle Coach skills to help participants stick with the year-long program. Many patients in your area have had great success with the program.
There are too many conflicting treatment choices for patients with prediabetes.	Our lifestyle change program is recognized by CDC. Referring your patients with prediabetes to the National DPP lifestyle change program is recommended and supported by both medical and public health guidelines. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 15-year <u>Diabetes Prevention Program Outcomes Study (DPPOS)</u> showed the long-term effectiveness of the lifestyle change program. Even after 15 years, and with some weight regain, the original participants in the lifestyle intervention arm of the DPP trial have a 27% lower risk for type 2 diabetes.</li> <li>• The Community Preventive Services Task Force <u>recommends</u> a combined diet and physical activity program such as the National DPP lifestyle change program for people at increased risk for type 2 diabetes.</li> </ul>

## 4 Follow up with HCPs and track engagements

After you meet with an HCP, track the response, next steps, and relevant notes. This will keep you and your team from making duplicate calls. Then send a quick follow-up, such as a handwritten thank-you note, to demonstrate your commitment and reinforce the HCP's action steps. If additional steps are required after your initial call, like sending materials or setting up another meeting, make sure to fulfill those requests within 24 to 48 hours.

If you are able to establish a more formal relationship with an HCP or practice, consider establishing a bi-directional referral process. With a bi-directional referral, a National DPP lifestyle change program delivery organization provides regular feedback on patient progress to the HCP who referred the patient to the program. This keeps communication active between the HCP and the program delivery organization, and also allows the HCP to observe the immediate and long-term benefits of the program through his/her patients. [Find out more about bi-directional referrals and how they can be implemented here](#)

## 5 Work with other organizations in your area that offer the National DPP lifestyle change program

Programs near one another may find it beneficial to work together to conduct outreach to HCPs. By doing so, you will avoid duplicating outreach to the same HCPs. You will reap benefits by pooling resources to make the outreach process cost-efficient.

# Steps to Conduct Broad Outreach Through HCP Associations

In addition to one-on-one outreach, consider organizations and groups, both formal and informal, that already communicate regularly with HCPs, whom they trust and from whom they prefer to receive information, or those places where HCPs communicate with each other. The following steps will help you get started.

## 1 Identify local HCP associations

A great way to access large numbers of HCPs is to reach out to local HCP associations and offer to speak about the program or distribute information at a meeting or event. You can also ask these groups to include information about your program in their regular communications (e.g., newsletters, email blasts, or social media posts). Templates are available in the **Resources Toolkit**. Ask to speak with the person responsible for communication or marketing activities for the organization because they will have authority to use these types of communication vehicles or can direct you to the most appropriate person.

### LOOK FOR LOCAL CHAPTERS OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS IN YOUR AREA

- American Medical Association (AMA)
- American Nurses Association (ANA)
- American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP)
- American Association of Managed Care Nurses (AAMCN)
- American Academy of PAs (AAPA)
- American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)
- National Medical Association (NMA)
- National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMS)
- National Black Nurses Association (NBNA)
- Association of Asian-Pacific Community Health Organization (AAPCHO)

## 2 Identify presentation opportunities

There may be opportunities to speak to a larger audience of HCPs about the National DPP lifestyle change program. There are often opportunities to present to HCPs and other medical staff at departmental meetings, lunch-time learning events, grand rounds, and even health fairs—especially at larger practices or health systems—are often looking for presenters on a variety of topics to engage their HCPs and other medical staff. If your lifestyle change program is affiliated with a health care system, you may already know who to contact for more information. If not, reaching out to the continuing education department, educational human resources department, or even the health care system library can be a way to find out what opportunities exist and how to get involved.

Academic detailing programs are another way to connect with a larger audience of HCPs. More information can be found through the [NaRCAD Detailing Directory](#)

## 3 Recruit local HCPs to serve as champions

One of the strongest motivators for HCPs is the power of peer persuasion. Recruiting HCPs to be “champions” to talk about the program to their professional colleagues can be a highly effective promotional strategy. Start by reaching out to HCPs who have referred their patients to the program in the past and seen positive outcomes. Ask them if they would be willing to help promote your program to their peers. In your outreach, include all members of the health care team who may be willing to advocate, not just physicians.

Use local HCP events and budding relationships with local professional organizations to identify potential champions and create the equivalent

of a speakers' bureau for your local program. This group could be instrumental in building a peer-to-peer voice for the program. Your local American Diabetes Association chapter may also be a professional resource for guidance; they will likely know physicians who are advocates in your community

When you are identifying potential local HCP champions, ask yourself questions such as:

- Who is a local advocate for type 2 diabetes prevention?
- Who are compelling presenters about health or diabetes and/or prediabetes?
- Are there local academic institutions with a stake in type 2 diabetes prevention?
- Are there health care practices that are well known or influential?

Once you have identified potential candidates—and they have agreed to participate—you can use the HCP talking points in the **Resources Toolkit** to relay how to talk about the program and its benefits. After preparing HCPs, ask them to help identify and track speaking opportunities.

Also, once champions are identified, you can work with them to spread the word to professionals about your lifestyle change program through their own social networks. Engaging with well-connected HCPs and asking them to talk informally to their colleagues about the program in their day-to-day interactions can also be highly effective. Few things are more powerful than word-of-mouth. Research has shown that HCPs use informal communication channels to exchange ideas and practices. Because NPs and PAs can easily transition across practice specialties, they often have extensive networks where they can share program messages.



## **USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMAIL MARKETING TO REACH HCPS**

*Increasingly, HCPs can be found on social media. Many groups and associations that HCPs are involved in, at both the local and national levels, will have a social media presence of some kind. Posting information about the National DPP lifestyle change program to social media groups most closely associated with HCPs in your area is a great strategy for gaining their attention.*

*Each social media channel is different and requires signing up for an account, as well as some basic knowledge of how to navigate the platform. On Facebook and LinkedIn, you may find HCP-related groups where you can share a post about your lifestyle change program. While some groups will be open to anyone and only require you to have an account to share your post, others may be closed to non-members. In this case, look for an administrator to contact about posting opportunities. On Twitter, reach out to a specific account to request that they tweet or retweet information about your lifestyle change program to their followers.*

*In addition to social media, there are also new email marketing tactics to explore in your outreach efforts. You may be able to purchase an email list of HCPs in your area. Use one of the email blast templates in the **Resources Toolkit** to send out an email promoting the National DPP lifestyle change program to the HCPs on your list.*



[www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention)