



NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2022–2025



**Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention**
National Center for
Health Statistics

“NCHS has expanded knowledge, catalyzed positive change, and advanced science to improve public health and wellness since 1960.”



Message from the Director

I came to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in 2020, when COVID-19 was first emerging in the United States. Soon after, the virus had spread to every corner of the globe. With the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at the lead, public health sprung to action and has worked at a feverish pace ever since. NCHS has been an integral part of this effort from the beginning.

At NCHS, our ability to mobilize and adapt resources quickly to support COVID-19 was based on a strong history of scientific excellence. NCHS has expanded knowledge, catalyzed positive change, and advanced science to improve public health and wellness since 1960.

To now be at the helm of this important work is deeply humbling, especially during these challenging times, when new partnerships, discovery, and data are so desperately needed.

NCHS is meeting these demands by collecting, studying, and sharing COVID-19 data; pursuing better and faster ways to collect health information; and leveraging our team’s unique skills and experiences to move science and health in new, more equitable directions.

Our strategic plan—which was developed collaboratively with NCHS staff, CDC colleagues, and other partners—will drive these and other Center-wide efforts by creating a roadmap for NCHS to best achieve its mission and goals. It also outlines our core values of accuracy, integrity, objectivity, quality, and trust.

Read on to learn more about NCHS’ vision for the future and how our strategic plan will get us there.

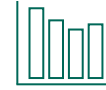
Brian C. Moyer, Ph.D.
Director, National Center for Health Statistics
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Executive Summary



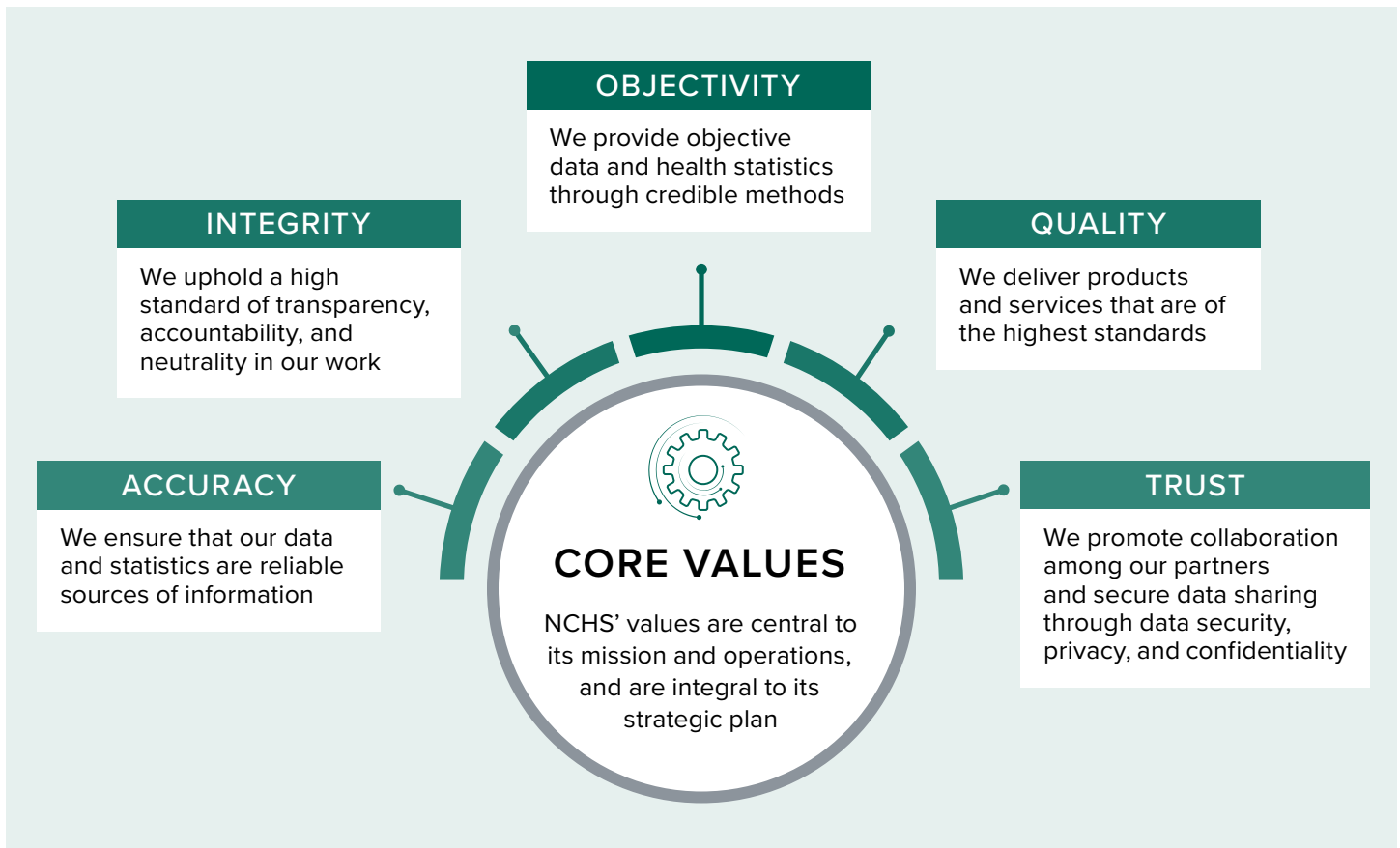
VISION

To be a world-class innovator and provider of health data and statistics



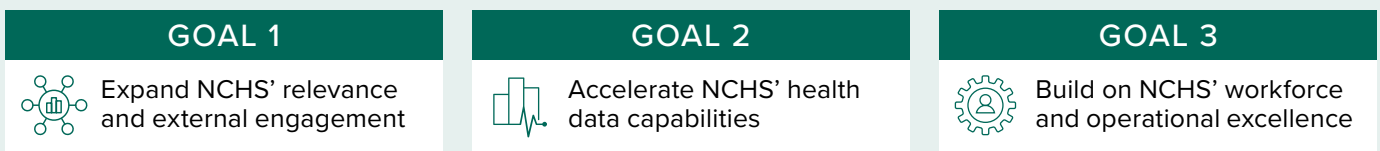
MISSION

NCHS collects, analyzes, and disseminates timely, relevant, and accurate health data and statistics. Our products and services inform the public and guide program and policy decisions to improve our nation's health.



GOALS

NCHS' goals reflect the broad, long-term accomplishments it aspires to achieve:



About NCHS

NCHS has been the nation’s principal health statistics agency for more than 60 years. It was established in 1960 when the National Office of Vital Statistics and the National Health Survey merged. NCHS includes five Offices and six Divisions that support the Agency’s mission through data collection, analysis, and dissemination ([Figure 1](#)).

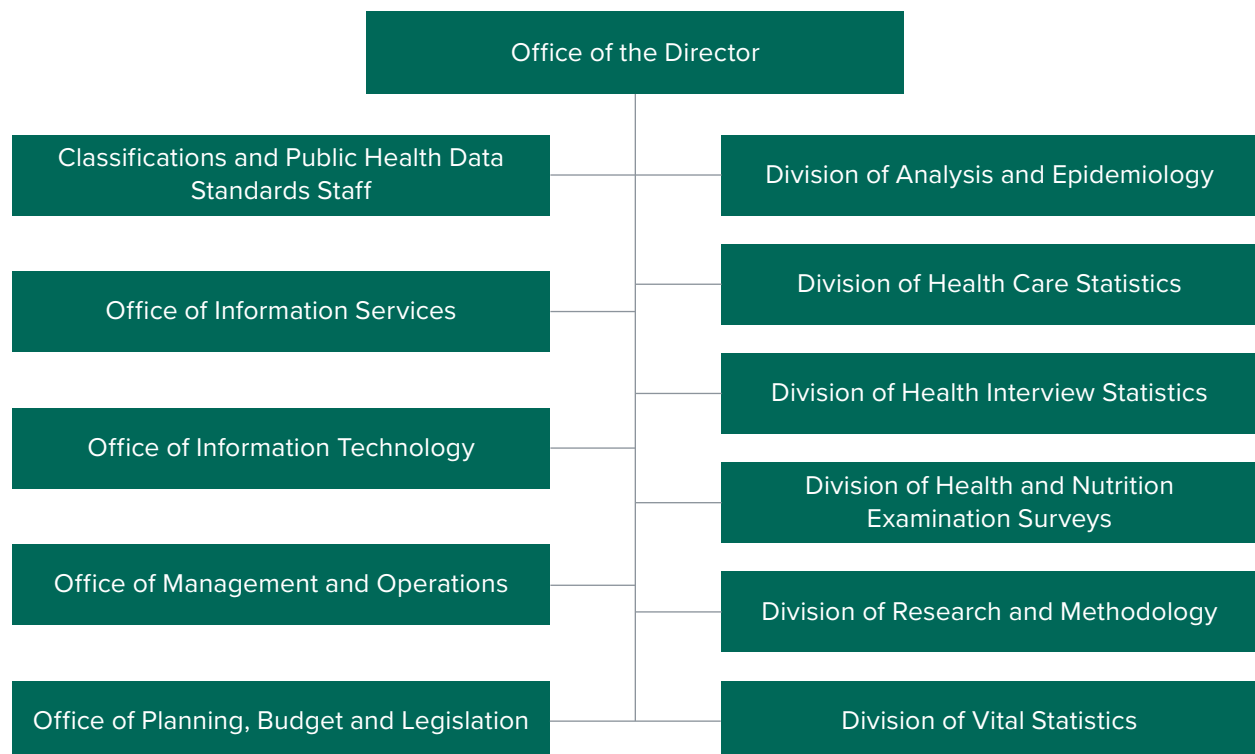
NCHS’ data have been instrumental in guiding health policy, assessing and monitoring the nation’s health, and advancing research. These data are used to inform the legislative process. Congressional support agencies, such as the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and the Government Accountability Office, use NCHS data to develop health reports and address issues of public health interest. NCHS data are also used throughout the public and private sectors for a wide range of purposes, from health services and market research to program planning and evaluation.

NCHS’ authorization from Congress addresses the full spectrum of concerns in the health field from birth to death, including overall health status, lifestyle and exposure to health risks, the onset and diagnosis of illness and disability, and the use and financing of health care and rehabilitation services. Legislative authority for health statistics is mandated in sections 304, 306, 307, and 308 of the Public Health Service Act (PHSA). Together, these sections define the scope of NCHS authorities and responsibilities. The [Statutory Authorities of the National Center for Health Statistics](#) describes the Center’s current authority (as of December 2020). This resource also provides an overview of the evolution of federal health statistics law in the United States, representing the accumulation of more than a dozen public laws from more than 60 years.

For more information, visit the [NCHS website](#).

Figure 1. NCHS Organizational Chart

NCHS’ workforce comprises statisticians, public health experts, and other professionals that sit within the Center’s Office of the Director and its five Offices and six Divisions



Strategic Planning Process

NCHS completed a structured strategic planning process, which is outlined in [Figure 2](#). A set of guiding principles—collaboration, deliberate decision making, and transparency—drove the process. This led to a strategic plan that is focused on building and strengthening existing NCHS capabilities, accelerating innovation, and increasing efficiency. The plan reflects feedback from one-on-one interviews with NCHS leadership, focus

groups with staff in various roles across the Center, employee feedback from surveys, brainstorming sessions, e-mail correspondence, conversations with key partners, and engagement with leaders from across CDC who work closely with NCHS.

For more information about NCHS partnerships, see [Appendix A](#).

Figure 2. Development Approach

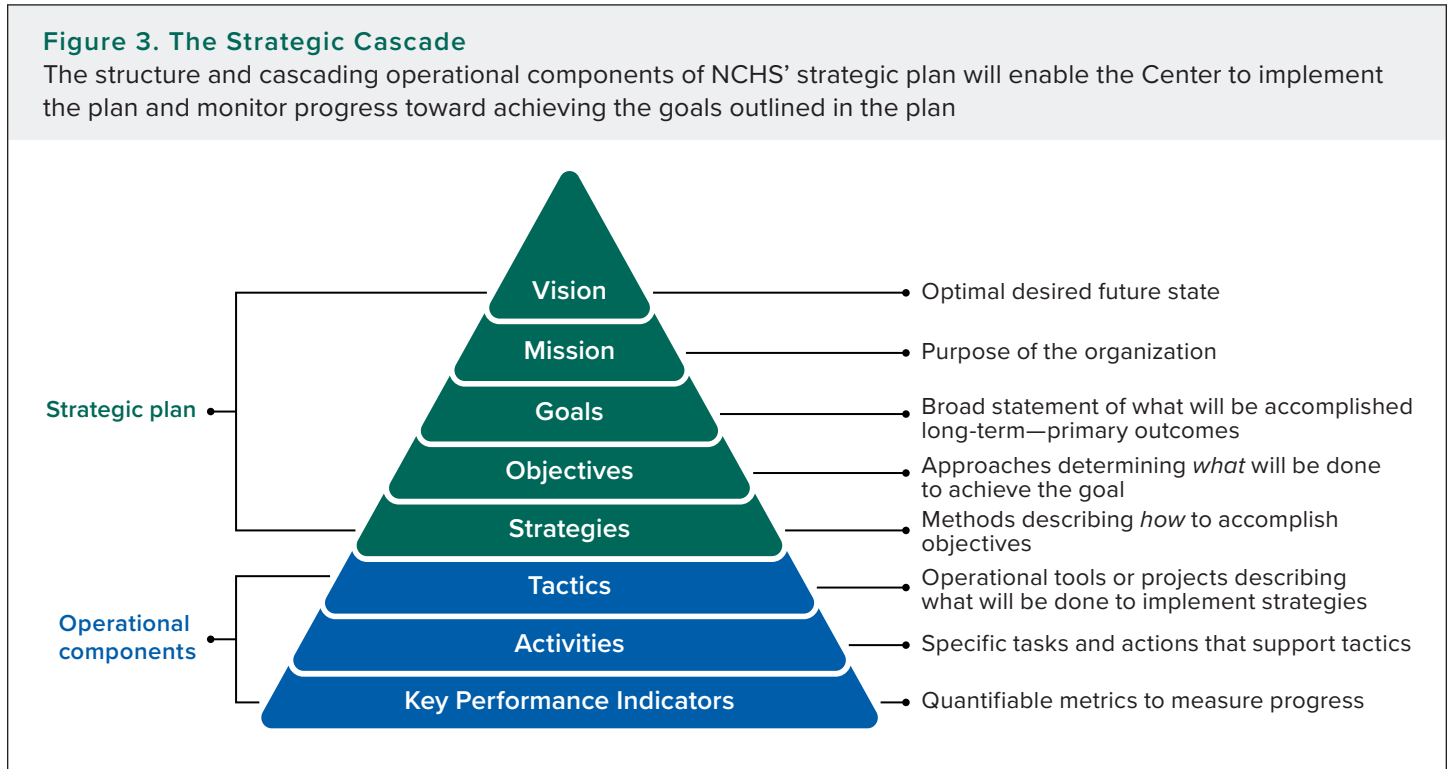
NCHS deployed a five-phase approach to develop its strategic plan

1	Identify approach and priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mapped the approach, timeline, and steps of the strategic plan process ▪ Identified case studies to understand critical needs from across the Center and other public health organizations ▪ Engaged leadership to identify goals for NCHS' future
2	Gather data and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Built a common understanding of NCHS' current state through an organizational analysis and environmental scan ▪ Gathered information from staff and external partners through interviews, surveys, and feedback sessions ▪ Synthesized findings and identified themes and areas needing additional feedback
3	Plan and draft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducted an iterative feedback process and solicited input from senior leaders ▪ Created a draft plan that included goals, objectives, and strategies ▪ Shared the draft with staff and external partners for additional feedback
4	Review and prepare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalized the strategic plan ▪ Outlined future work needed to operationalize the plan ▪ Leveraged existing findings and further engaged staff and partners to inform the operational plan, tactics, and key considerations
5	Launch plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed and executed a comprehensive communication campaign, including partner engagement and digital communication ▪ Identified staff to advance implementation ▪ Established a structure and procedures to track implementation progress

Key Plan Components

The strategic cascade

NCHS' strategic plan includes vision and mission statements, three goals, objectives, and strategies to achieve these goals. The plan also includes tactics, activities, and key performance indicators (KPIs) that guide how the plan will be implemented (Figure 3).



Goal overview

The strategic plan includes three goals that address critical priorities for the Center over the next 4 years.

GOAL 1	GOAL 2	GOAL 3
Expand NCHS' relevance and external engagement	Accelerate NCHS' health data capabilities	Build on NCHS' workforce and operational excellence
<p>Objective 1.1: Expand understanding of current and potential users</p> <p>Objective 1.2: Improve user awareness of and access to NCHS data</p> <p>Objective 1.3: Build and maintain strategic partnerships with public and private entities</p>	<p>Objective 2.1: Modernize core systems and infrastructure</p> <p>Objective 2.2: Expand the range of data sources and collection methods</p> <p>Objective 2.3: Enhance analytical tools and techniques</p>	<p>Objective 3.1: Strengthen NCHS' workforce management</p> <p>Objective 3.2: Improve professional development and leadership capacity</p> <p>Objective 3.3: Improve internal coordination, collaboration, and operations</p>



Strategic Plan: Goal 1

Expand NCHS' relevance and external engagement

In the face of emerging health challenges and rapid technological evolutions, NCHS strives to remain at the forefront of health policy guidance and research advancement.

Goal 1 strengthens NCHS' role in informing policies that promote **health equity**. Using NCHS data, policymakers, researchers, and public health professionals will be

able to identify health disparities and track progress toward greater health equity in the United States. NCHS' health equity priorities will 1) expand data collection and analyses, 2) innovate through methodological work, and 3) assess cross-sector disparities using linked data.

Learn about more ongoing efforts to provide health equity data in [Appendix B](#).

Objectives	Strategies
1.1: Expand understanding of current and potential users	1.1.1: Identify current usage and emerging needs for products and services 1.1.2: Increase user base of NCHS products and services 1.1.3: Perform continuous analysis of user needs
1.2: Improve user awareness of and access to NCHS data	1.2.1: Build awareness of NCHS' unique value 1.2.2: Increase access to and usage of products and services to inform health programs and policies 1.2.3: Strengthen NCHS' role in informing health equity priorities
1.3: Build and maintain strategic partnerships with public and private entities	1.3.1: Further collaborate with current partners 1.3.2: Broaden engagement with new partners



NCHS Quick Win: Key Contributions to CDC's COVID-19 Data Resources

NCHS' role in directly supporting the response to the pandemic has strengthened the Center's relevance. The addition of data from multiple surveys in COVID Data Tracker has led to increased visibility of and access to NCHS products and services on mainstream platforms. This includes the Research and Development Survey (RANDS) pivoting to ask questions specifically pertaining to the pandemic, production and release of mortality data visualizations, and reporting of the majority of nationwide mortality records within 10 days of receipt. RANDS also focuses on other topics, including access to healthcare, chronic conditions, food security, health insurance, and psychological distress.



Strategic Plan: Goal 2

Accelerate NCHS’ health data capabilities

With a focus on data and infrastructure modernization, NCHS will invest in programs and opportunities that continuously improve the accuracy, relevance, and timeliness of its data.

Goal 2 aligns with [CDC’s Data Modernization Initiative \(DMI\)](#), while increasing data lifecycle capabilities and continuing to emphasize survey excellence.

NCHS will implement DMI-related efforts and increase its data lifecycle capabilities by:

- Modernizing the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) through investments in all NVSS jurisdictions’ capabilities
- Developing a virtual data enclave as part of NCHS’ Research Data Center to securely increase accessibility of restricted data
- Advancing NCHS’ linkage capabilities, methods, and data assets, and tapping into the wealth of electronic health record information

- Forging new methods to produce model-based estimates to address geographic, temporal, and demographic gaps in data
- Pursuing other innovative activities

These priorities will enable NCHS to provide a more timely, relevant, and accurate picture of the population’s health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

A critical component of Goal 2 is the continued emphasis on excellence and innovation in the development and execution of surveys, such as the National Health Interview Survey, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, National Health Care Surveys, and National Survey of Family Growth.

For more information about NCHS data collection systems, see [Appendix C](#).

Objectives	Strategies
2.1: Modernize core systems and infrastructure	2.1.1: Maintain and enhance core data systems 2.1.2: Improve data integration 2.1.3: Scale infrastructure to support new capabilities
2.2: Expand range of data sources and collection methods	2.2.1: Identify new and nontraditional data sources 2.2.2: Modernize and innovate NCHS surveys 2.2.3: Leverage enterprise services to identify and aggregate health data
2.3: Enhance analytical tools and techniques	2.3.1: Strengthen current modeling, forecasting, visualization, and other capabilities 2.3.2: Identify and implement innovative analytical methods



Strategic Plan: Goal 3

Build on NCHS’ workforce and operational excellence

NCHS will meet current and future challenges by adopting innovative workforce models and establishing operational improvements.

Goal 3 demonstrates NCHS’ commitment to building and supporting a diverse workforce and inclusive culture. Expanding on the success of [CDC’s Diversity and Inclusion Executive Steering Committee \(DIESC\)](#), NCHS

will continue to cultivate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. This will include development of workforce metrics for hiring and promotions, emphasis on rewards and recognition, creation of mentorship programs for diverse hires, and increased reliance on enterprise training and education.

Objectives	Strategies
3.1: Strengthen NCHS’ workforce management	3.1.1: Build and implement a workforce strategy 3.1.2: Foster a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce 3.1.3: Refine NCHS recruitment and retention strategies
3.2: Improve professional development and leadership capacity	3.2.1: Expand technical, leadership, and management skills 3.2.2: Emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion in trainings, programming, and policies 3.2.3: Advance succession planning efforts and processes
3.3: Improve internal coordination, collaboration, and operations	3.3.1: Improve speed and agility of internal operations 3.3.2: Increase transparency of work and foster collaboration across NCHS 3.3.3: Address barriers to internal knowledge sharing, communication, and collaboration



NCHS Quick Win: Internal Communication

Effective internal communication and collaboration is essential to NCHS’ success. To increase knowledge, information sharing, and transparency; update staff about process changes; and enhance existing employee communications, NCHS developed several internal communication tools, including:

- A biweekly message from the director
- An events calendar that promotes NCHS and CDC activities
- A monthly newsletter on legislative affairs
- A monthly newsletter for NCHS partners and collaborators

Implementation and Performance Management

Implementation and performance management will require NCHS to ensure the strategic plan aligns with and drives everyday work, fosters engagement at all levels, and monitors and communicates progress regularly.

NCHS will develop an operational plan that will outline the required activities, milestones, resources, and risks and associated mitigation strategies to ensure successful implementation.

NCHS will develop related KPIs in accordance with CDC's Program Performance and Evaluation Office's (PPEO) [Framework for Evaluation in Public Health](#). NCHS will define logic models that will be used as the basis for ongoing monitoring and refinement as needed. The logic models will:

- Communicate the purpose of the goals and expected results
- Describe actions that will lead to the desired results
- Improve staff expertise in planning, implementation, and evaluation
- Provide transparency to leadership and partners
- Identify potential implementation obstacles and mitigation strategies

Logic models will be reviewed and revised periodically to reflect new evidence, lessons learned, and changes in context, resources, activities, and expectations.

Internal and external communication and engagement were critical to the development of the strategic plan and will continue to be integral throughout its implementation. NCHS will deploy methods, such as formal and informal progress checks, impact surveys, and communicating findings to NCHS leaders, staff, and partners.

For more information on logic models, please visit [CDC PPEO: Logic Models](#) and [CDC Program Evaluation Logic Model Checklist](#).



Appendix A

NCHS partners

Achieving NCHS' mission would be impossible without partner support. The strategic plan encourages connection and cooperation by fostering relationships with new and existing partners.

NCHS' partners include:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- CDC Centers, Institutes, and Offices
- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Federal statistical agencies
- International collaborators
- State and local public health organizations
- Academia and research institutions
- Professional associations
- Nonprofit organizations

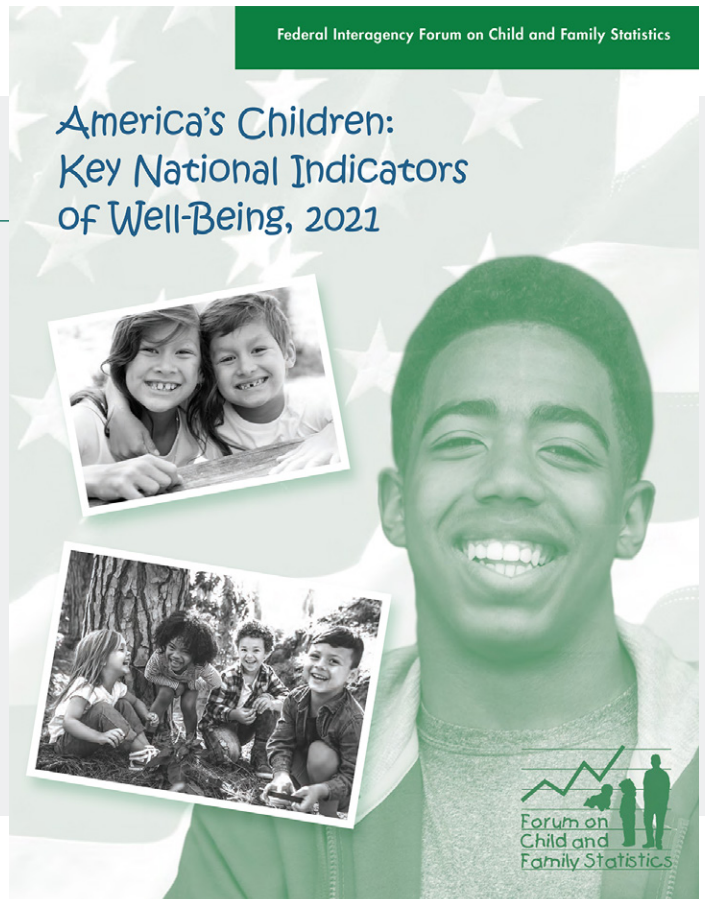


Partnership Spotlight: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

NCHS is a key member of the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. As a member of the Forum, NCHS collaborates with more than 20 other federal agencies to enhance and improve data collection and reporting methods on children and families.

Part of this work includes releasing America's Children, an annual report that presents key national indicators that measure important aspects of children's lives. The purpose of America's Children is to provide accurate data about the wellbeing of children and their families in an easy-to-understand format, stimulate action that affects positive change, and cultivate relationships between statistical and policy communities.

Learn more at www.childstats.gov/.



Appendix B

Prioritizing health equity at NCHS

As part of NCHS' strategic priorities, the Center will cultivate comprehensive health equity science by:

Expanding data collection and analyses

NCHS will add questions to data collection systems and release estimates on additional drivers of health inequities, including nonfinancial barriers to care, gender identity, smaller racial subgroups, environmental exposures, geographic location, and occupational information.

Example initiative: The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey aims to expand questions that assess social determinants of health, health disparities, and laboratory biomarker measures of inflammation, allergies, and stress.

Innovating with methodological work

NCHS will use data science techniques to conduct unique methodological work related to health equity. For example, NCHS will develop a set of tools and processes for producing early provisional small-area estimates of key health outcomes.

Example initiative: The Division of Vital Statistics will link its mortality file with the American Community Survey to identify potential improvements to race and Hispanic ethnicity data collection.



Assessing cross-sector disparities using linked data

NCHS will link its health data with datasets from other federal agencies to better identify and analyze health disparities driven by social determinants of health. This will expand cross-sector data analyses supporting the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act](#).

Example initiative: NCHS programs will use linked data to improve information about race and ethnicity in administrative databases and create resources for linked public-use data files that include survey and administrative data.

Appendix C

NCHS data collection systems

NCHS uses a variety of data collection systems to obtain information about health and wellness. These data highlight disparities, monitor trends, identify gaps in health access and care, support research, and are used to evaluate the impact of health policies and programs.

Population surveys

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) is a program of studies designed to assess the health and nutritional status of adults and children in the United States. The survey includes physical examinations, selected medical and laboratory tests, and self-reported data. NHANES data are used to develop public health policy, direct and design health programs and services, and expand health knowledge for the nation.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes/index.htm.

National Health Interview Survey

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) collects data on a broad range of health topics through personal household interviews. Survey results have been instrumental in providing data to track health status, health care access, and progress toward achieving national health objectives.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/index.htm.

National Survey of Family Growth

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) gathers information on family life, marriage and divorce, pregnancy, infertility, use of contraception, and men's and women's health. NSFG results are used to plan health services and health education programs and to complete statistical studies of families, fertility, and health.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/index.htm.

Provider surveys

National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey

The National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey is designed to meet the need for objective, reliable information about the provision and use of ambulatory medical care services in the United States. Findings are based on a sample of



visits to nonfederally employed office-based physicians who are primarily engaged in direct patient care and, starting in 2006, a separate sample of visits to community health centers.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/nchs/ahcd/index.htm.

National Electronic Health Records Survey

The National Electronic Health Records Survey (NEHRS) is an annual survey of nonfederally employed, office-based physicians practicing in the United States. NEHRS does not survey physicians practicing in the fields of anesthesiology, radiology, and pathology.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/nchs/nehrs/about.htm.

National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey

The National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey is designed to collect data on the utilization and provision of ambulatory care services in hospital emergency and outpatient departments and ambulatory surgery locations. Findings are based on a national sample of visits to emergency departments, outpatient departments, and ambulatory surgery locations of noninstitutional general and short-stay hospitals.

National Hospital Care Survey

The National Hospital Care Survey is designed to provide accurate and reliable health care statistics that answer key questions of interest to health care and public health professionals, researchers, and health care policy makers. This includes tracking the latest trends affecting hospitals and health care organizations and factors that influence

the use of health care resources, the quality of health care, and disparities in health care services provided to population subgroups in the United States.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs/index.htm.

National Post-acute and Long-term Care Study

The National Post-acute and Long-term Care Study produces reliable national and state statistical estimates on the supply, use, and characteristics of assisted living and similar residential care communities, adult day services centers, nursing homes, home health agencies, hospice agencies, long-term care hospitals, and inpatient rehabilitation centers.

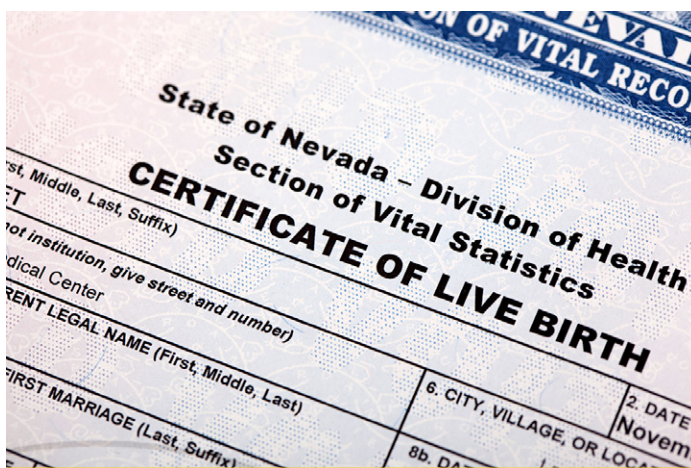
Learn more at www.cdc.gov/nchs/npals/index.htm.

Vital records

National Vital Statistics System

The National Vital Statistics System is an intergovernmental data sharing system for official vital statistics. These data are provided through contracts between NCHS and vital registration systems operated in the various jurisdictions legally responsible for the registration of vital events, including births, deaths, marriages, and divorces.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/index.htm.



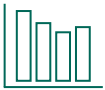
NCHS Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2022–2025

At a Glance



VISION:

To be a world-class innovator and provider of health data and statistics



MISSION:

NCHS collects, analyzes, and disseminates timely, relevant, and accurate health data and statistics. Our products and services inform the public and guide program and policy decisions to improve our nation's health.



CORE VALUES:

Accuracy, Integrity, Objectivity, Quality, and Trust



GOAL 1: Expand NCHS' relevance and external engagement

Objective 1.1: Expand understanding of current and potential users

Strategies:

- Identify current usage and emerging needs for products and services
- Increase user base of NCHS products and services
- Perform continuous analysis of user needs

Objective 1.2: Improve user awareness of and access to NCHS data

Strategies:

- Build awareness of NCHS' unique value
- Increase access to and usage of products and services to inform health programs and policies
- Strengthen NCHS' role in informing health equity priorities

Objective 1.3: Build and maintain strategic partnerships with public and private entities

Strategies:

- Further collaborate with current partners
- Broaden engagement with new partners



GOAL 2: Accelerate NCHS' health data capabilities

Objective 2.1: Modernize core systems and infrastructure

Strategies:

- Maintain and enhance core data systems
- Improve data integration
- Scale infrastructure to support new capabilities

Objective 2.2: Expand the range of data sources and collection methods

Strategies:

- Identify new and nontraditional data sources
- Modernize and innovate NCHS surveys to acquire health data
- Leverage enterprise services to identify and aggregate health data

Objective 2.3: Enhance analytical tools and techniques

Strategies:

- Strengthen current modeling, forecasting, visualization, and other capabilities
- Identify and implement innovative analytical methods



GOAL 3: Build on NCHS' workforce and operational excellence

Objective 3.1: Strengthen NCHS' workforce management

Strategies:

- Build and implement a workforce strategy
- Foster a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce
- Refine NCHS recruitment and retention strategies

Objective 3.2: Improve professional development and leadership capacity

Strategies:

- Expand technical, leadership, and management skills
- Emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion in trainings, programming, and policies
- Advance succession planning efforts and processes

Objective 3.3: Improve internal coordination, collaboration, and operations

Strategies:

- Improve speed and agility of internal operations
- Increase transparency of work and foster collaboration across NCHS
- Address barriers to internal knowledge sharing, communication, and collaboration

Stay Connected



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