



Building Safer Communities: Supporting Epilepsy Programs at the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Position: The Epilepsy Foundation believes epilepsy should be a federal public health priority, and supports investments in public health programs that help build safer communities, end stigma associated with epilepsy, educate community leaders, and build awareness that benefits everyone with epilepsy and other chronic health conditions and disabilities. **We urge Congress to continue to invest in critical epilepsy public health programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by supporting a funding level of \$9.5 million to ensure the safety and health of people with epilepsy.**

About Epilepsy: The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading national voluntary health organization that speaks on behalf of nearly 3.4 million Americans with epilepsy and seizures. We foster the wellbeing of children and adults affected by seizures through research programs, educational activities, advocacy, and direct services. Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime.

Background: The CDC epilepsy programs are building safer communities for people living with epilepsy through a focus on increasing public awareness and knowledge; improving epilepsy care and self-management; improving communication and combating stigma; promoting partnerships; and establishing data to track epilepsy-related incidence and prevalence, health disparities, access to care, and burden of illness. Stigma surrounding epilepsy continues to fuel discrimination and isolates people with epilepsy from the mainstream of life. Despite great progress in recent years, epilepsy remains a formidable barrier to educational opportunities, employment, and personal fulfillment among children and adults. The CDC epilepsy programs target law enforcement personnel and emergency medical responders; school-based students, nurses and staff; childcare providers; seniors; unemployed and underemployed adults; and underserved minorities living with epilepsy. Through our cooperative agreement with the CDC, the Epilepsy Foundation has provided education and/or direct training to more than 80,606 law enforcement and first responders, 56,385 school nurses and 390,524 students and teachers. Sustained federal funding for epilepsy programs at the CDC would support development of community based demonstration projects to improve health outcomes in the US; expansion of the Managing Epilepsy Well (MEW) network; and a national epilepsy campaign.

CDC's Healthy People 2020 has an epilepsy-specific goal, increasing the proportion of people with epilepsy and uncontrolled seizures who receive appropriate medical care, which can be achieved in part with sustained investment in CDC's epilepsy programs. Additionally, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *Epilepsy Across the Spectrum: Promoting Health and Understanding*, makes four recommendations that are being carried out in great part because of the epilepsy programs at CDC. Sustained funding would ensure we maintain and expand quality programs, and fulfill the recommendations of the IOM report.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Beatriz Duque Long, Interim Vice President Public Policy and Advocacy at bduquelong@efa.org or 301-918-3764.