

USPSTF Recommendations Development Process

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) is a scientifically independent group of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force works to improve the health of people nationwide by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications. The recommendations only apply to people who have no signs or symptoms of the specific disease or condition under evaluation, and the recommendations address only services offered in the primary care setting or services referred by a primary care clinician.

The Task Force follows a multistep process when developing each of its recommendations.

1. Review Topic Nominations



- Anyone can nominate a new topic or an update to an existing topic at any time on the USPSTF website.
- The USPSTF reviews nominated topics based on several criteria, including the topic's relevance to prevention and primary care and importance for public health, the potential impact of the recommendation, and whether there is new evidence that may change a current recommendation.
- The USPSTF selects and prioritizes topics for review.

2. Develop Draft Research Plan



- After a topic is prioritized for review, the USPSTF and researchers from an Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) develop a draft research plan for the topic. The draft research plan includes key questions to be answered and target populations to be considered.
- Expert reviewers provide input during the development of the draft research plan.
- The USPSTF then posts the draft research plan on its website for 4 weeks, during which anyone can comment on the draft research plan.

3. Review Public Comments & Finalize Research Plan



- The USPSTF and the EPC review and consider all comments. Updates are made based on major themes in public comments that help clarify the research plan.
- The USPSTF finalizes and posts the final research plan on its website.

4. Review Evidence & Develop Draft Recommendation



- Using the final research plan as a guide, the EPC gathers, reviews, and analyzes evidence on the topic from studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals.
- The EPC then develops a draft evidence review summarizing the research on the topic.
- The USPSTF discusses the evidence review and uses the information to determine the effectiveness of a service by weighing the potential benefits and harms.
- The USPSTF develops a draft recommendation statement based on these discussions.
- Expert reviewers provide input during the development of the draft recommendation statement.
- The USPSTF then posts the draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review to its website for a 4-week public comment period.

5. Review Public Comments & Finalize Recommendation



- The USPSTF and EPC consider all public comments on the draft evidence review and the USPSTF considers all public comments on the draft recommendation statement.
- The EPC finalizes the evidence review and the USPSTF finalizes the draft recommendation statement.
- The USPSTF posts the final recommendation statement, final evidence review, and an evidence summary on its website. The recommendation statement and the evidence summary are also published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.