

THE USPSTF RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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STEP 1: TOPIC NOMINATION

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

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STEP 2: DRAFT AND FINAL RESEARCH PLANS

Once a topic is selected, the Task Force and researchers from an Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) develop a draft research plan for the topic. This plan includes key questions to be answered and target populations to be considered. The draft research plan is posted on the Task Force's Web site for four weeks, during which anyone can comment on the plan. The Task Force and the EPC review all comments and consider them while making any necessary revisions to the research plan. The Task Force then finalizes the plan and posts it on its Web site.

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STEP 3: DRAFT EVIDENCE REVIEW AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT

Using the final research plan as a guide, EPC researchers gather, review, and analyze evidence on the topic from studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. The EPC then develops one or more draft evidence reviews summarizing the evidence on the topic. Members discuss the evidence reviews and use the information to determine the effectiveness of a service by weighing the potential benefits and harms. Members then develop a draft recommendation statement based on this discussion. The draft evidence review and draft recommendation statement are posted on the Task Force Web site for four weeks.

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STEP 4: FINAL EVIDENCE REVIEW AND FINAL RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT

The Task Force and EPC consider all comments on draft evidence reviews and the Task Force considers all comments on the draft recommendation statement. The EPC revises and finalizes the evidence reviews and the Task Force finalizes the recommendation statement based on both the final evidence review and the public comments.

All final recommendation statements and evidence reviews are posted on the Task Force's Web site. The final recommendation statement and a final evidence summary, a document that outlines the evidence it reviewed, are also published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.