Position: The Epilepsy Foundation understands the financial constraints of our nation, but also encourages Congress not to abandon funding for critical epilepsy public health programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Current programs are important to ensuring the safety and health of people with epilepsy; we support a level funding request to maintain the CDC Epilepsy program ($13.3 million).

Background: Since 1968, the Epilepsy Foundation has served as the only national voluntary health organization wholly dedicated to the welfare of people with epilepsy. The mission of the Epilepsy Foundation is to stop seizures and SUDEP, find a cure and overcome the challenges created by epilepsy through efforts including education, advocacy, and research to accelerate ideas into therapies.

The Epilepsy Foundation has long realized that epilepsy should be a priority for the federal public health system, and that public health programs can 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. Stigma surrounding epilepsy continues to fuel discrimination and isolates people with epilepsy from the mainstream of life. Among older children and adults, epilepsy remains a formidable barrier to educational opportunities, employment, and personal fulfillment. There is a continuing need to better understand the public health impact of the condition, promote initiatives that encourage self management, and improve mental health. Meeting these needs will help create an environment in which people feel free to disclose their epilepsy or seizures without fear of discrimination or reprisal.

The Epilepsy Foundation believes that many of the 13 recommendations from the 2012 Institute of Medicine report Epilepsy Across the Spectrum reinforce the need for public health programs that help people with epilepsy access the best care and the importance of a health care workforce that is educated about seizures an epilepsy. To that end, we continue to advocate for increased federal funding for epilepsy programs in the following federal priority programs:

- Expansion of the Managing Epilepsy Well (MEW) network, care coordination programs, and health care education training protocols. An investment in care coordination and health professional training programs targeting patients who are seniors, ethnic minorities, and veterans would provide national leadership in developing, testing, and disseminating innovative solutions to help people with epilepsy better manage their disorder and improve their quality of life.
- Expansion of the new Epilepsy Foundation national campaign which will improve awareness and eliminate stigma associated with epilepsy.
- Examination of attitudes toward epilepsy in the U.S. public which would support research and surveys to implement targeted anti-stigma programs to improve public attitudes toward epilepsy.
- Development of a registry of epilepsy mortality in the U.S. which would clarify the frequency, risk factors, and causes of epilepsy-related death.
**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** - The CDC is the lead federal agency for protecting the health and safety of people. It is responsible for providing credible information to enhance health decisions and for promoting health through strong partnerships. CDC’s Healthy People 2020 includes an epilepsy-specific goal which directly supports continuation of the epilepsy program. The goal to “increase the proportion of people with epilepsy and uncontrolled seizures who receive appropriate medical care” can only be accomplished with this program intact. Through their cooperative agreement with CDC, the Epilepsy Foundation provided education and/or direct training to more than 22,000 nurses, 10,000 veterans, 60,000 first responders, and 265,000 students thus helping to achieve the Healthy People 2020 goal.

CDC has built a program to address public health issues related to epilepsy which focuses on increasing public awareness and knowledge; improving care; 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. CDC programs focus on law enforcement and emergency medical responders, school-based students and staff, seniors, unemployed and underemployed adults, and underserved minorities living with epilepsy.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has released its report on epilepsy: *Epilepsy Across the Spectrum: Promoting Health and Understanding*, which makes four recommendations that, with increased funding, the epilepsy program at CDC could address. We advocate for support for increased programming and funding at the CDC to develop a registry of epilepsy mortality in the U.S.; expand Managing Epilepsy Well (MEW) network; and support national epilepsy campaign. The Epilepsy Foundation strongly believes that the CDC program funding is critical to maintain the quality programs and fulfill the recommendations of the IOM report, taking advantage of the research and guidance that the report provides.