

## **The Community Guide Spotlight: Shiriki Kumanyika**

[John Anderton] Welcome to another Community Guide spotlight. I'm John Anderton and today I'm talking with Dr. Shiriki Kumanyika, a member of the Community Preventive Services Task Force. Dr. Kumanyika is a research professor in the Department of Community Health and Prevention at the Drexel University, Dornsife School of Public Health, where she also serves as founder and chair of the African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network—a national network of academic scholars and community research partners who generate and translate research on nutrition, physical activity, and weight issues in African American children and adults.

Dr. Kumanyika, tell us about your work with The Community Guide. What motivated you to get involved with the task force?

[Shiriki Kumanyika] When I was asked if I would agree to be nominated for the task force I was really honored because I was familiar with the work of the task force and I thought it was very important work. And I also thought that I would have something to contribute based on some of my prior experiences.

[John Anderton] What do you see as some of the strengths and benefits of The Community Guide and the Community Preventive Services Task Force?

[Shiriki Kumanyika] Well, The Community Guide has a lot of strength. It focuses on key topics in public health high-priority topics. The methodology is meticulous and rigorous, which I find... I mean, that's really important so that things are transparent. There's a lot of depth and as we work on the task force and work with the staff when something isn't quite right, people go back and they redo it to make sure that what comes out of the task force is really as close to perfect as we can get it. The transparency's also important because evidence changes, evidence can be questioned, so I think that's another real strength. And the fact that we are on the public record means that people can hear the deliberations, that the users and the stakeholders can hear what we're saying and how we making our decisions. I think that the third strength is that it's relevant to a wide variety of users. I've been really impressed with the Liaisons from different organizations and so there's a direct link to agencies or organizations that can make use of the task force results and also inform the kinds of questions that The Community Guide is addressing.

[John Anderton] What is the primary value of evidence-based decision-making?

[Shiriki Kumanyika] Well, I think as an academic, we always have to remind ourselves that evidence isn't the only thing that's involved in decision-making or their policy and practical considerations, but evidence has to be in the mix. If it's not the starting point, then it has to be accessed at some point. Why do we need evidence-based decision-making? Because we have limited resources and we need to focus them on things that work. Not everything that looks good works, not everything that's even well done works, because they're so many unknowns in terms of how people respond to interventions and policies and practices. So I think the value is that we're maximizing the chances that where we put the money in terms of interventions and community settings is the most likely to have an effect and have an impact on health.

[John Anderton] Has your involvement with The Community Guide had any influence on how you go about your work in public health?

[Shiriki Kumanyika] It really has. It's kept me very current with what we know about what works in communities. And my role as an academic, I think, is to produce evidence that can be used. And the way it's affected my work is to have me think more and more about who can use the findings of The Community Guide, to publicize them more when I give talks, and even in our own research network, we are putting more of an emphasis on connecting to stakeholders—black organizations, black communities—to make sure they know that there are things out there that work and that can be used to develop a comprehensive approach to improving community health. We've actually changed our name to the Council on Black Health just a...just a few months ago so that we can say to people we're really interested in having that impact on health. And I think that my experiences on The Community Guide task force really have influenced me to think more and more about making sure the evidence gets out there where it's needed.

[John Anderton] If you could communicate with everyone from a particular audience about The Community Guide, who would you reach out to, and what would you say?

[Shiriki Kumanyika] Well, because I'm particularly interested in a health disparities and health equity issues, and in black community health, I think I would speak to black community stakeholders who are trying to improve health—and there are many who are—but I'm not sure that some of these organizations are connected to The Community Guide and connected to evidence. So, my message would be, consult The Community Guide. Look through the different topics, and see where we have the most evidence about what could be done in black communities. Put a package together and get out there and try to implement it, and we'll be glad to help.

[John Anderton] Thank you, Dr. Kumanyika. You've been listening to a special task force member spotlight from The Community Guide. For more information about The Community Guide or the Community Preventive Services Task Force, visit [the-community-guide-dot-org](http://the-community-guide-dot-org).