

# 5 Diabetes Facts for Policymakers & Staff

*Tips For Connecting With Constituents*

1

## Language Matters

- Use neutral, person-centered language. For example:
  - “Person with diabetes” instead of “diabetic”
  - “She lives with diabetes” instead of “She suffers from diabetes”
- For constituents with diabetes, it is a part of everyday life, but they aren't defined by it. Focus on the individual and not their disease.

2

## Diabetes Is A Protected Disability Under Civil Rights Laws

- People with diabetes may experience discrimination or have trouble gaining needed accommodations because diabetes isn't visible or they don't identify as having a disability.
- Diabetes affects the endocrine system, which creates and releases the hormones that control different functions in our bodies. In a person with diabetes, the pancreas doesn't produce any or enough insulin to convert food into energy, or their cells become insulin resistant.

3

## Stigma and Stereotypes Persist

- Diabetes doesn't come from eating too much sugar or not exercising enough. It is a complex, chronic and progressive disease with many genetic, environmental and socioeconomic contributing factors.
- Suggesting that people with diabetes did something to deserve it unfairly blames them for a disease they did not ask for and cannot control.
- Support diabetes community efforts to eliminate the stigma that prevents many people with diabetes from receiving the health care they need and the compassion they deserve.

4

## Diabetes Disparities Are Pervasive

- Diabetes disproportionately impacts communities of color in the United States. Black and Brown communities have higher percentages of people with diabetes, and higher risk of serious complications including heart disease, blindness and lower limb amputations.
- People in low income communities also have higher diabetes rates and reduced access to standards of care, raising their risk for diabetes-related complications or death.
- Patients and providers from these communities need a voice in policy discussions to advance equitable legislation and regulations to eliminate diabetes disparities.

5

## There Is No Cure (Yet)

- Scientific and technological advances have given us a better understanding of diabetes and more blood glucose management tools, but there is still no cure.
- Public and privately funded research is underway to help preserve or repair the body's ability to produce insulin. Robust federal research appropriations, approval pathways and reimbursement in federal programs all help to accelerate finding and funding a cure for diabetes, and supporting people with diabetes until the cure is a reality.