

FIGURE 14

WORKFLOW OF SCREENING GUIDELINES DEVELOPMENT



Review Topic Nominations

Anyone can nominate a new topic for review at any time. U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) reviews, selects, and prioritizes nominated topics based on relevance to and impact on disease prevention, primary care, and public health.



Develop Draft Research Plan

USPSTF and Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) develop a research plan and seek expert input on the prioritized topic. USPSTF posts the draft research plan to website for public comments.



Review Public Comments and Finalize Research Plan

USPSTF and EPC carefully review public comments and revise research plan as needed. USPSTF posts the final research plan to website.



Review Evidence and Develop Draft Recommendation

USPSTF assesses EPC-gathered evidence, weighing effectiveness and benefits/harms and develops a draft recommendation statement, which is posted to the website, along with EPC evidence review, for public comments.



Review Public Comments & Finalize Recommendation

Both the draft recommendation and evidence review are revised and finalized based on public comments and published in peer-reviewed journals and on the USPSTF website.

Panels of subject matter experts, convened by professional organizations and government agencies (such as USPSTF convened by HHS), meticulously review the available evidence, and carefully weigh benefits of cancer screening against any potential harms before recommending at what age a person should be screened, for which cancer type, how frequently, and by which method. Summarized here as an example is the recommendation process followed by the USPSTF.

During the development of cancer screening guidelines, the USPSTF is supported by the researchers from the Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) program, a U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality initiative under which institutions in the United States and Canada are awarded five-year contracts to serve as EPCs. Once USPSTF decides that a screening guideline merits consideration (cancers for which there are currently no screening guidelines) or revision (for existing guidelines) in light of new scientific evidence, the researchers from the EPC review all relevant

scientific literature on potential benefits and harms of screening, which screening method has maximal benefit and minimal harm, age of initiation and frequency of screening, and produce a draft evidence review. The USPSTF uses the draft evidence review to develop a draft recommendation statement. Both documents are made publicly available on the USPSTF website for various stakeholders to provide their feedback. The EPC researchers and the USPSTF review the feedback on the draft evidence review and draft recommendation statement, respectively, and revise the documents if necessary. The final recommendation statement, outlining the new and/or revised guidelines, and the final evidence summary, outlining the reviewed evidence, are posted on the USPSTF website, and published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

There are minor differences among different organizations in the process that they use to develop screening guidelines, but the overall rigor that is put in place to ensure maximal benefits and minimal harms for public health and safety is the same.