



PREVENTIVE HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

A CRITICAL PUBLIC HEALTH RESOURCE

2009

Success Stories

Texas

A large—and growing—number of residents of Williamson County, Texas, are at risk of developing life-threatening diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Community nutrition surveys confirm that residents of the central Texas county are eating foods that are low in nutrition and high in calories. In addition to a higher risk for premature death, an unhealthy diet is also associated with the burden of high cost on the medical care system.

To promote a healthy diet, Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) Block Grant funds were used to develop and implement the Community Garden and Nutrition Program, which encourages participants to grow and eat their own fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables. Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) formed partnerships with local volunteer organizations, cities, and school districts to establish the gardening program.

Using PHHS Block Grant funds, WCCHD hired a horticulturalist to lead the Community Garden and Nutrition Program. Since 2005, the horticulturalist has designed the first Expert Gardener Certification course, created a gardening education curriculum, and developed and taught “From the Garden to the Table/Del Jardín a la Mesa,” cooking and nutrition classes for both English- and Spanish-speaking participants. Participants who are gardening also are benefiting from low-impact physical activity.

The Community Garden and Nutrition Program has been successful in raising awareness among county residents about community gardening, improving nutrition, and increasing physical activity.

In particular, the program has

- Certified 165 Expert Gardener volunteers.
- Provided gardening, cooking, and nutrition classes to more than 400 participants.
- Donated more than 5,000 pounds of fresh, organic produce to local food pantries, Meals on Wheels, nursing homes, retirement facilities, and free lunch programs at a local senior center.
- Hosted field trips for about 1,700 preschool-aged children and 650 school-aged children.

Virginia

Chronic diseases are the leading causes of death for Virginians. It is estimated that 2.2 million Virginians live with one or more of the following chronic diseases: heart disease, stroke, cancer, asthma, diabetes, and arthritis. The annual cost of chronic disease in Virginia totals \$24.6 billion; nationally, chronic disease annual costs represent approximately 75% of the nation’s \$1.4 trillion annual health care costs.

Virginia is proactive about chronic disease prevention and control. Programs such as the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) provide the information and resources needed to help reduce risks and promote healthier lifestyles. Since 2005, PHHS Block Grant funds have been used to bring this program to areas of the state that have a higher prevalence of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes. In health districts across the state, the CDSMP coordinator recruits adults living with chronic diseases as well as their caregivers. Program participants complete a 6-week course that teaches self-management strategies such as medication management, pain management, and relaxation techniques.





Because the program offers strategies that promote self-management techniques, participants are improving their skills in managing their chronic diseases, using more self-management strategies, and adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors (e.g., increased walking, better diet, proper use of medications). Participants are also reporting a decrease in hospital visits, which could potentially save Virginia thousands of dollars in health care costs.

In 2006, CDSMP completed three leader trainings that resulted in 25 new leaders who are now teaching CDSMP in two health districts. Some program participants have become leaders. With continued support, CDSMP will help Virginians spend less time in the hospital and more time practicing self-management strategies to improve their health.

Kansas

Lawrence and Douglas Counties in Kansas are working to reduce the number of overweight and inactive children and adolescents. In 2001, Wakarusa Valley Elementary school in Lawrence became the first Douglas County school to launch Get Moving!, a program that encourages early prevention of obesity. With PHHS Block Grant funds, the Get Moving! program focuses on participation in physical activity outside the physical education program in schools, encourages families to exercise together (especially during the winter months), and aims to increase the percentage of children and families who participate in regular physical activity.

Program elements include the following:

- A supply of Get Moving! cards. Participants use the cards to detail up to 12.5 hours of physical activity recorded in 30-minute increments.
- Any type of physical activity done outside of school time may be recorded on the card.
- Participants receive extra points for involving a “buddy” (family or friend) in the activity.

- Participants record the days they consumed at least five fruits and vegetables.
- Prizes are awarded for the first three cards returned during the year. A pool pass to the indoor or outdoor Lawrence Aquatic Center is awarded when the fourth card is turned in.
- The class with the highest participation percentage wins a pool party.

Over the past 5 years, the Get Moving! program has grown to include all 26 schools and educational service centers in Lawrence and 20 elementary schools in surrounding communities. During the 2004–2005 school year,

- The number of students completing at least four cards jumped from 256 to 753.
- Participants in the 1st–6th grades increased their physical activity, recorded in 30-minute increments, more than 6,000 hours.
- The number of cards turned in increased by 2,312.

A program that started in one Douglas county school has grown to become an effective and fun way for schools throughout the county to combat the growing epidemic of childhood obesity and the chronic health issues caused by this condition.

