



Bridging the Gap Between Science and Practice: Disseminating a School-based Nutrition and Physical Activity Program Among American Indians in New Mexico

Issue

Inadequate physical activity and poor eating habits are significant contributors to the rise in levels of obesity and type 2 diabetes among U.S. children. These lifestyle behaviors are established early in childhood and are reinforced in the home, school, and community. Recent research has documented the alarming increase in obesity and related diseases (e.g., diabetes) among American Indians.

Although a recently completed multi-site, randomized controlled trial has documented the benefits of a program aimed at increasing physical activity and improving dietary habits among American Indians, less is known about how to disseminate, diffuse and utilize the program in applied settings. Additional research is needed to bridge the gap between science and practice.

“American Indian and Alaskan Native adults suffer disproportionately from type 2 diabetes, and so do their young people. We need to focus on educating and preventing diabetes among American Indian and Alaskan Native people at early ages if we are to eliminate this terrible disparity.”

Tommy G. Thompson
Former Secretary, Health and Human Services

Response

Researchers at the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center have initiated a project to investigate the dissemination, diffusion, and utilization of Pathways - a school-based nutrition and physical activity program. A participatory approach was used to develop the culturally appropriate and theory-based Pathways program for third, fourth, and fifth grade students and their families. In the current project, three training and technical assistance centers will be established in New Mexico and Arizona. Strategic planning teams at each site will participate in all aspects of the research project.

While the overall goal of the project is to advance the practice of public health and use of participatory prevention research, the specific aims of the project are to:

- Establish and evaluate a participatory process;
- Conduct formative community assessments;
- Train community teams to disseminate the Pathways program; and
- Evaluate the adoption and utilization of the Pathways program in three new sites.

This project will provide useful information about how researchers can partner with communities to effectively disseminate, diffuse, and utilize a research-based program aimed at improving health.

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More Information

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For more information about CDC's Community-based Participatory Prevention Research, please contact the Office of Public Health Research, CDC, 1600 Clifton Rd., MS D-72
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