

# The Steps Program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Funding Period: 2003–2008

CDC's Steps Program funds states, cities, and tribal groups to implement community-based chronic disease prevention programs to reduce the burden of obesity, diabetes, and asthma by addressing three related risk factors: physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use. Steps-funded programs are showing what can be done locally in schools, work sites, communities, and health care settings to promote healthier lifestyles and help people make long-lasting and sustainable changes that can reduce their risk for chronic diseases.

## Background

The Steps Program in Philadelphia is working to build healthier communities in 15 contiguous Philadelphia neighborhoods—Center City–West, Cobbs Creek, Fairmount–Spring Garden, Haddington–Overbrook, Millcreek–Parkside, Nicetown–Tioga, Northern Liberties–West Kensington, Paschall–Kingsessing, Poplar–Temple, Schuylkill, Sharswood–Stanton, Southwark–Bella Vista, South Broad–Girard Estates, Strawberry Mansion, and University City. Programmatic efforts are focused on people most burdened by chronic diseases. The intervention area includes a high proportion of racial/ethnic minority groups—66% non-Hispanic black or African American, 5% Asian, and 5% Hispanic or Latino—who experience a disparately high prevalence of the targeted diseases and risk factors. In the Steps intervention area, 28% of residents live below the federal poverty level, and 13% do not have health insurance.

## Spotlight on Success

- Working closely together, the Philadelphia Steps Program and the 103 public schools located in the Steps intervention area have made great strides. More than 73% of the schools have implemented the School Health Index and established a Local School Health Council. In addition, a central-level health council was developed, which is made up of district administrators, external organizations, public agencies, parents, and community members. This group has been instrumental in helping evaluate current health-related policies and is responsible for drafting the first district-wide school wellness policy. Maintaining healthy school environments is now a district-wide priority for school officials and community leaders.
- The Philadelphia Steps Program supports Fitness by Design: the Health and Beauty of the African-American and Latina Woman, a signature beauty-salon–based health education program of the Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania and National Nursing Centers Consortium. This program is carried out in 20 salons in northern and western Philadelphia. More than 300 women received a community-based resource guide listing local physical fitness centers.

## Community Partnerships

Philadelphia's Steps community partnerships comprise 39 members who are implementing prioritized health promotion activities. At least 50% of members reside in the Steps intervention area. The partnerships engage many local agency and community representatives, including health care organizations, business and community leaders, local education agencies, faith-based organizations, and academic institutions. These diverse individuals and groups develop and work toward attaining policy goals and objectives related to chronic disease prevention in the Steps communities.

## Contact

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