

# Increasing Physical Activity and Improving Nutrition Among Young Children and Their Families

SUCCESS STORIES 2008

SOUTHEAST ALASKA



*Southeast Alaska's Steps Program and its partners expanded the reach of health promotion programs for young children and their families.*

## What is the public health problem?

The problem of overweight among U.S. preschool-age children is a serious one, with about 14% of those aged 2 to 5 years classified as overweight.\* In the areas served by the SE Alaska Steps Program, rural residents and Alaska Natives—primarily the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimpsian—are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases.

## How is Steps responding?

Because a large number of children are cared for outside of the home, the Steps Program partnered with the Association for the Education of Young Children–Southeast (AEYC) to implement a preschool program called Health on the Move. Working with Head Start and other child-care programs, they are increasing physical activity and improving nutrition among young children and their families.

## What is the health impact?

- 66 teachers and 435 children in 22 centers successfully completed Health on the Move. Of these, 80% met or exceeded their nutritional goals (e.g., more fruit and vegetable servings) and 70% met or exceeded their physical activity goals (e.g., more outdoor play).
- 20 of these child-care programs reported that the number of healthy nutrition and physical activity policies and practices increased 10% during September 2007–May 2008, as measured by the Nutrition and Physical Activities Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) tool.
- More than 200 parents participated in health education events at “Healthy Family Nights.”
- A first-ever partnership between the Steps Program; AEYC; the state’s Women, Infants, and Children supplemental nutrition program; and Tlingit and Haida Head Start is developing a standard physical activity and nutrition curriculum, *Color Me Healthy*, that will soon be implemented at all 167 Head Start centers and other child-care centers in southeastern Alaska.

## Why is this program working?

- According to *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*,<sup>†</sup> people will become more physically active if they are given health information along with access to new or improved places where they can be physically active. Also, evidence suggests that providing information and practical strategies related to good nutrition will lead to an increase in knowledge about healthy nutrition and an increase in healthy eating behaviors.<sup>§</sup>
- By partnering with AEYC, the Southeast Alaska Steps Program was able to reach a greater number of child-care centers than if it had acted alone.

\* National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Data, 2003–2004; † [www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org); § [www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/report/](http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/report/)

## CONTACT

Steps to a Healthier SE Alaska

SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC)

Website:  
[www.searhc.org](http://www.searhc.org)

CSI24473



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

E-mail: [nccdodsteps@cdc.gov](mailto:nccdodsteps@cdc.gov) • Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/steps>

