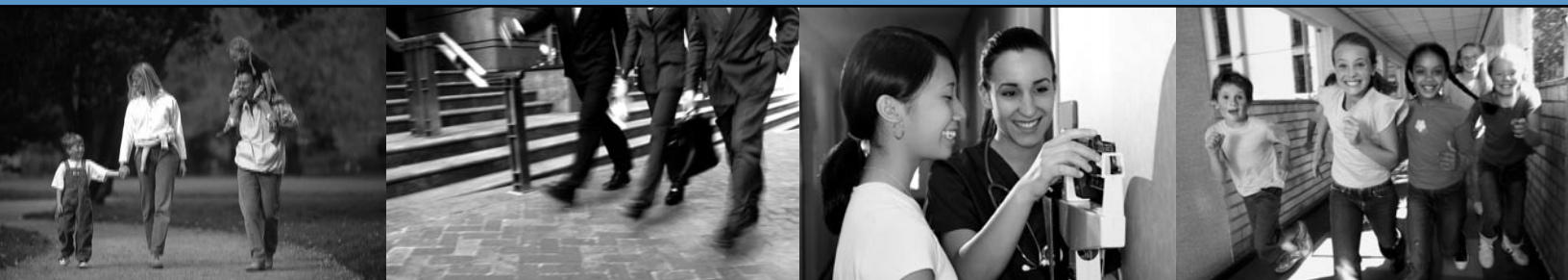


The Steps Program in Action:

Success Stories on Community Initiatives
to Prevent Chronic Diseases



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



“ If it were not for the Steps Program in Broome County, I might not be alive today. I am free of blood pressure medication, I have lost weight, and I have more energy because I live in a place that supports my healthy lifestyle.”

*Alan Wilmarth, Beneficiary of New York's
Broome County Steps Program*

The Steps Program in Action:

Success Stories on Community Initiatives
to Prevent Chronic Diseases



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Division of Adult and Community Health

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“The Steps Program is activating change in communities across our nation to support healthier lifestyles and prevent chronic diseases. Steps communities are leading the way in creating a national movement with long-lasting impact.”

Janet Collins, Director, National Center for
Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Growth of Chronic Diseases in the United States

Today, chronic diseases account for 7 in 10 deaths and affect the quality of life of 90 million Americans. Obesity, diabetes, and asthma are some of the leading causes of death, disability, and rising health care costs in the United States. The significant rise in chronic disease rates among adults and young people is a concern across the country, including in communities, schools, and work sites and among families, health care providers, and policy makers.

How Did It Come to This?

Rises in chronic disease rates did not happen in the blink of an eye—they came about slowly after a century of profound cultural changes. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, people often struggled to get enough food, faced unsanitary living conditions, and engaged more extensively in physical labor. Today, most people’s struggles involve finding ways to balance increasingly demanding work and family obligations. Add to our hectic schedules the growth of labor-saving technology, the vast array of high-calorie “convenience foods,” widespread commercial promotion of unhealthy foods and tobacco products, and a vast array of sedentary entertainment choices, it is no wonder that chronic disease rates have exploded in this country.

Finding New Ways to Combat Chronic Diseases

Exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet, and avoiding tobacco use and exposure can help people prevent and manage chronic diseases. However, getting to the place where these behaviors are the norm will require another cultural shift—one just as dramatic as the previous century’s, which resulted in people eating more and exercising less. It will require public health practice to move from a focus on the individual to population-based efforts. To shift cultural norms further toward health and wellness, the public health pioneers of the 21st century will have to use

- Policy, systems, and environmental change strategies.
- Community-driven initiatives that are evidence- and practice-based.
- Multifaceted and integrated approaches to risk factor reduction and the achievement of health-affirming outcomes.
- Nontraditional partnerships.

Ultimately, local public health efforts must be transformed to accelerate changes in health behaviors and health outcomes.

Role of the Steps Program

Concentrated efforts are needed in local communities across the country to address the national epidemic of chronic diseases. Steps Programs support these efforts by serving as learning laboratories for increasing local momentum and providing a tipping point for the nation toward better community health.

The Steps Program funds communities across the country to show how local initiatives can reduce the burden of chronic diseases by encouraging people to be more physically active, eat a healthy diet, and not use tobacco. The cooperative agreement program, which is administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is supporting local-level change by

- Creating a groundswell of activity in local communities to support healthier lifestyles.
- Reaching beyond the public health community and bringing together a wide range of disciplines—including business, transportation, and city planning—to help improve the health of local communities.
- Funding rural counties (through state health departments), urban areas, and tribal groups in areas where the chronic disease burden is especially high and people are most in need of prevention services.
- Implementing public health interventions that are based on scientific evidence and have been successful at changing people's behaviors.

Accelerating Change at the Community Level

Steps communities have made important changes in the areas where Americans live, learn, work, and play. As a result of the Steps program,

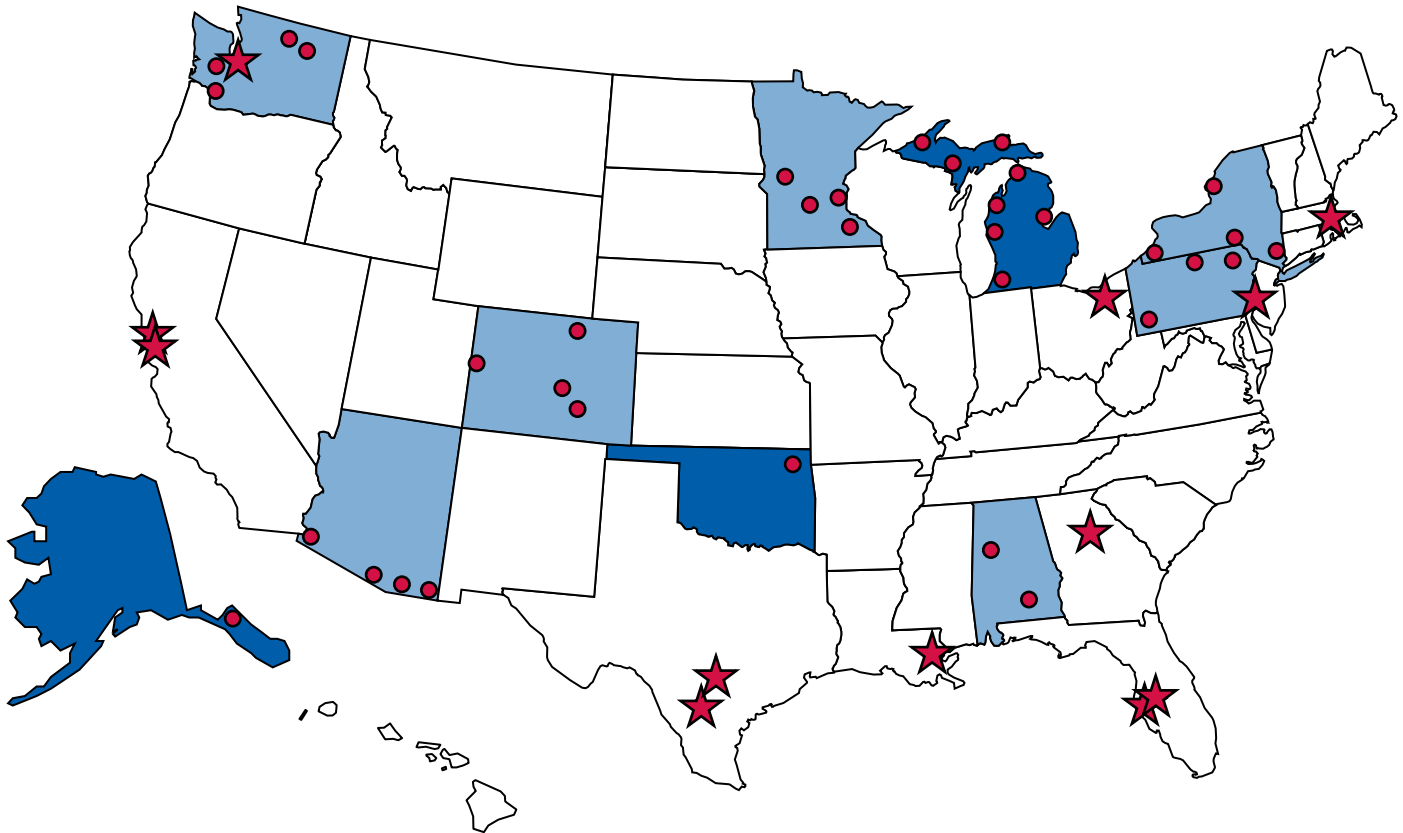
- Hundreds of school districts across the country have increased students' access to healthy foods, increased their opportunities for physical activity, and implemented policies mandating tobacco-free environments.
- Hundreds of work sites are offering healthier foods, providing ways to get physically active, and helping reduce tobacco use among their employees.
- Communities across the country are promoting safe routes to school, developing new walking trails, advocating for healthier food options in schools, and encouraging healthy food labeling in restaurants and grocery stores.

About This Publication

This booklet provides a snapshot of how the Steps-funded communities 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. The state, community, and tribal success stories featured in this booklet illustrate the wide range of Steps-funded activities taking place in communities across the country.



Steps Communities



State-Coordinated Small Cities/Rural Communities

- AL 2 Areas
- AZ 4 Areas
- CO 4 Counties
- MN 4 Areas
- NY 4 Counties
- PA 3 Counties
- WA 4 Areas

Tribes/Tribal Entities

- Cherokee Nation Health Services Group, OK
- Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan
- Southeast Alaska Regional Consortium

Large Cities/Urban Communities

- Austin–Travis County, TX
- Boston, MA
- Cleveland, OH
- DeKalb County, GA
- New Orleans, LA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Salinas–Monterey County, CA
- San Antonio, TX
- Santa Clara County, CA
- Seattle–King County, WA
- St. Petersburg–Pinellas County, FL
- Tampa–Hillsborough County, FL

“ Since our first venture of walking to help people with diabetes, obesity, asthma, and promoting good health through fitness, some of [our] participants lost weight, lowered their blood pressure, increased their walking, and learned the importance of walking to increase good health. I want you to know that the program works...”

*Louise, Jamaica Plain NeighborWalk leader
Boston Steps Program*

Responding to **Community** Needs

Communities play an important role in helping shape how people live, learn, work, and play. For example, data from a variety of disciplines, including public health, urban design, and transportation planning, suggest that characteristics of our communities—such as proximity of facilities, street design, density of housing, availability of public transit and of pedestrian and bicycle facilities—play a significant role in promoting or discouraging physical activity.¹

Stretching from coast to coast, and through rural counties, urban areas, and tribal reservations, Steps communities are helping create healthier communities through the promotion of physical activity and healthy eating, communitywide physical activity and weight management programs, and smoking cessation efforts.

1. CDC. Active Community Environments Initiative. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/health_professionals/active_environments/aces.htm.



Anishinaabe/Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan's Steps Program

Informing chronic disease prevention and health promotion initiatives

What is the public health problem?

American Indian Communities experience higher rates of chronic conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

- Although Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) surveys have been conducted in Michigan since 1988, health officials previously were not able to collect enough information from American Indians to derive meaningful data.
- In 2005 and 2006, the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan (ITCM) conducted BRFSS surveys in its American Indian Steps community. According to the 2006* Steps BRFSS data,
 - More than 31% of respondents reported being overweight and about 38% reported being obese.
 - Nearly 20% reported having diabetes.
 - About 47% reported being physically inactive.
 - More than one-third reported that they smoke.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program helped inform chronic disease prevention and promotion activities by collecting this vital health behavior data.

- In 2005, the Anishinaabe Steps Program worked with the ITCM, a consortium of the state's 12 federally recognized tribes, to conduct BRFSS surveys specifically tailored for American Indian adults.

- Survey questions covered a range of topics including health care access, tobacco use, and preventive health screening practices in the American Indian population.

What is the impact?

- Because the survey captured tribal-specific information—which never before existed in Michigan—tribal leaders can use the data to design and implement chronic disease prevention activities and provide support for policy and environmental changes.
- The results of the first survey provided baseline data about health conditions, risk behaviors, and screening practices in this population. For example, almost 17% of respondents said they had doctor-diagnosed diabetes, and more than half (57%) of those said they had taken a class on managing the condition.

Why this program is working

Because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention allows BRFSS questions to be modified or added to reflect local needs and concerns, the data collected by the ITCM can be used to effectively address the unique needs of the area's tribal communities.

* Most recent data available

Broome County's Steps Program

Helping control diabetes and obesity



What is the public health problem?

Because it is associated with a range of health problems and can lead to the development of diabetes and other chronic diseases, obesity is a major public health concern in Broome County. According to a 2006* Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey in the Broome County Steps Program intervention area, more than three in every five respondents reported being either overweight or obese.

How Steps is responding

The Broome County Steps Program is reaching families in rural areas by implementing an innovative walking program, BC Walks, and helping 15 school districts create a consolidated bid to purchase healthy foods at lower cost. In addition, along with the Office for Aging and the local YMCA, the Steps Program expanded the county's nationally recognized Mission Meltaway program, which incorporates diabetes prevention strategies and encourages lifestyle changes by using a group approach to weight management. It features eight weekly support group meetings covering such topics as menu planning, nutrition, physical activity, and mental health. The Broome County YMCA offers free 8-week memberships to Mission Meltaway participants and provides comparative "before and after" weight, blood pressure, body mass index, and hip-to-waist ratio measurements.

What is the impact?

- BC Walks has enrolled more than 80,000 participants in the last 4 years. In one year, the percentage of people in the community who walked for 30 minutes or more, 5 days a week, increased from 53% to 61%.
- Making healthy foods more affordable for schools has resulted in a 14% increase in fruit and vegetable consumption at district schools.
- More than 90 Mission Meltaway programs have reached over 3,000 people, 80% of whom were at risk for diabetes due to their overweight or obesity. Participants who completed the program lost more than 5 pounds on average. In one Mission Meltaway program, 91 of the 100 participants lost weight, 65 increased their physical activity levels, and all 100 improved their knowledge of proper nutrition and exercise after only 4 weeks in the program.

Why this program is working

According to *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*,[†] interventions that focus on building social networks that support behavior change are effective in increasing physical activity, which can help with weight control. Recent studies have shown that weight loss and regular physical activity can delay the onset of diabetes among people at high risk of developing the disease.[‡]

* Most recent data available

† <http://www.thecommunityguide.org>

‡ <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/prevent.htm>



Ohio

Cleveland's Steps Program

Organizing community gardens

What is the public health problem?

Low rates of fresh fruit and vegetable consumption and high rates of physical inactivity are important public health concerns in Cleveland, Ohio.

According to data from the 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, approximately 70% of Cleveland's adults ate fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetable per day and more than 50% did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity.*

How Steps is responding

Since 2005, the Cleveland Steps Program has been working with the Community Gardening Program (CGP) at Ohio State University Extension (OSUE) to help improve access to fresh produce and increase physical activity through the creation of community gardens in Steps intervention neighborhoods.

- CGP offers "Starting a Community Garden" workshops in each Steps community, meets with block and street clubs, and partners with social service agencies to provide gardening tools and resources.
- In 2008, OSUE is focusing outreach efforts on Steps Intervention Schools and City of Cleveland Recreation Centers to help start new gardens.
- Thirteen new gardens were created in 2006, surpassing the eight-garden goal, and eighteen more gardens were created in 2007. All gardens proudly display a "Steps to a Healthier Cleveland Community Garden" sign.

What is the impact?

- The 31 new community gardens engaged 1085 new gardeners in physical activity and increased access to fresh produce for hundreds of families.
- Thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables have been donated to area food pantries.
- A new farmers' market was created in Cleveland's Central Neighborhood. Six young people are employed to sell the fresh produce they grow at a local Steps community garden through a program sponsored by St. Vincent's Charity Hospital. This new program is sustained through sales at the market, as well as grants and donations from the Greater Cleveland community.
- Local foundations and businesses supported an additional seven gardens through grants totaling more than \$30,000 for infrastructure improvements and the creation of garden-related programs.

Why this program is working

By providing a catalyst for neighborhood and community development, community gardens empower local residents to help overcome the health challenges facing their communities and lead to sustainable changes in the built environment. Besides producing nutritious foods, they help conserve resources, preserve green space, and create opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy, and education.†

* Most recent data available

† <http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/>

Cochise County's Steps Program

Encouraging healthy eating behaviors



Arizona

What is the public health problem?

Overweight and diabetes are major public health concerns in Cochise County. According to Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, among Arizona's Cochise County residents,

- About 73% reported that they eat fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and 46% reported being physically inactive (2005* BRFSS).
- Almost 35% reported being overweight, about 26% reported being obese, and nearly 8% reported having doctor-diagnosed diabetes (2006* BRFSS).

How Steps is responding

The Cochise County Steps Program implemented the Washington State Dairy Council's Healthy Habits for Life program—a 6-week intervention designed for women, who traditionally purchase and prepare foods for their families.

- Interactive slide shows are offered by trained health educators in a variety of community-based settings. Topics include physical activity and meal planning, including calorie counting, grocery shopping tips, and dietary journaling.
- Health educators also collaborate with local women's fitness clubs to offer monthly membership discounts to program participants.

What is the impact?

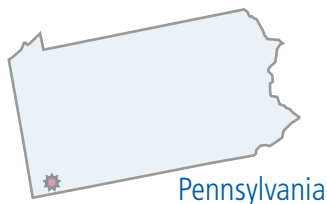
- Participants' knowledge about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables daily increased by 17%.
- Participants reported eating more than three additional servings of vegetables and two more servings of fruits each week. Whole and 2% milk consumption decreased by 8% and 1%, respectively, and skim milk consumption increased by 9%.
- Among those who cooked with oils, 22% reported using more canola oil, and the use of shortening and butter decreased by 10% and 5%, respectively.

Why this program is working

Evidence suggests that providing information and practical strategies related to good nutrition and meal preparation will lead to an increase in knowledge about healthy nutrition and an increase in healthy eating behaviors.[†]

* Most recent data available

† <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/report/>



Fayette County's Steps Program

Improving physical activity and healthy eating habits

What is the public health problem?

Overweight among children greatly concerns public health officials in Fayette County because it may contribute to the development of conditions such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. Local school nurses and pediatricians identified a need for a weight management program to help Fayette County children and their family members reach and maintain a healthy weight through physical activity and healthy eating.

- According to 2006* data from a Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, about 37% of Fayette County's adult residents are overweight and just over 29% are obese, further emphasizing the need to help children adopt healthy lifestyles and avoid health problems in adulthood.
- Nationwide results from the 2003–2004* National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, using measured heights and weights, indicate that about 14% of U.S. children aged 2–5 years are overweight.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program is helping reduce childhood overweight by encouraging physical activity and healthy eating habits.

- Fayette County's Steps Program partnered with Highmark BlueCross BlueShield to bring KidShape to their county.

- KidShape is an evidence-based weight management program that focuses on increasing awareness about good nutrition and healthy eating among overweight children aged 6–14, those who are at risk of becoming overweight, and their family members.
- The Steps Program coordinates and manages the program, while the Highmark BlueCross BlueShield pays all program costs, including those for materials and staff salaries (project coordinator, dietitian, and physical activity/mental health specialists).
- Families participating in at least seven of the nine sessions have their nominal registration fee returned.

What is the impact?

- Participating families report eating more fruits and vegetables and spending more time being physically active, according to program evaluation data.
- Fayette County School districts, which regularly assess students' body weight, can now connect overweight children and their families with KidShape for help in reaching and maintaining a healthy weight.

Why this program is working

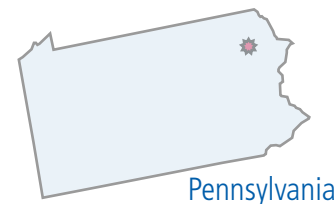
Evidence suggests that providing information and practical strategies related to good nutrition and meal preparation will lead to an increase in knowledge about healthy nutrition and an increase in healthy eating behaviors.†

* Most recent data available

† <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/report/>

Luzerne County's Steps Program

Increasing the community's exposure to chronic disease prevention messages



What is the public health problem?

Overweight, obesity, diabetes, and asthma are growing concerns in Pennsylvania's Luzerne County.

- According to 2006* Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, almost 37% of the county's adult residents reported being overweight and more than 26% reported being obese.
- Nearly 9% reported having doctor-diagnosed diabetes, which is associated with overweight, and more than 10% reported having asthma.
- In the 2005* BRFSS survey, almost half of county residents reported getting no regular physical activity, which is a risk factor for becoming overweight or obese.

How Steps is responding

Luzerne County's Steps Program partnered with a local television station, WNEP, to create public service announcements (PSAs) promoting healthy, active lifestyles.

- WNEP highlighted the Steps Program in a major newscast and donated booth space during its annual Home and Backyard Show, allowing the Steps staff to provide chronic disease prevention information to more than 5,000 residents.
- Over a 6-month period, 13 different media outlets printed or broadcast news about the Steps Program. To date, 255 television PSAs (or "spots") that publicize ways to increase physical activity levels or control asthma have aired on WNEP.

What is the impact?

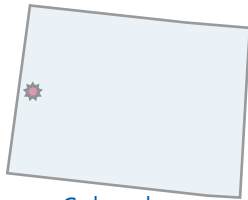
- WNEP has provided up to two free television spots for every paid spot that airs—almost doubling viewer exposure to health and active lifestyle messages at no additional cost.
- Steps funding was leveraged by 600% through sponsor donations that covered production and airtime costs. WNEP also donated additional in-kind services.
- Media coverage keeps the Steps Program's healthy lifestyle messages in the public eye, increasing people's knowledge about how small changes in nutrition and physical activity can help prevent many chronic conditions, including obesity, diabetes, and asthma.

Why this program is working

According to *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*,[†] mass media campaigns, when combined with other community-wide programs, are effective in addressing some chronic disease risk factors. Also, community health may be enriched by developing or strengthening social networks, which makes group activities more available to community members and enhances their collective ability to bring about change.

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://www.thecommunityguide.org>



Colorado

Mesa County's Steps Program

Promoting healthy living

What is the public health problem?

High rates of obesity and diabetes in Mesa County cause serious health problems among residents and cost the state millions of dollars annually in medical expenditures, lost work, and premature deaths. Poor nutrition and physical inactivity are significant factors in the development of chronic diseases such as obesity and diabetes. According to 2006* Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data,

- More than 57% of adults in Mesa County are overweight or obese.
- Almost 7% of county residents have diabetes.

How Steps is responding

Mesa County's Steps Program created LiveWell, a free, year-round health promotion program based on community recommendations for ways to improve residents' health through workplaces, health care providers, and private-sector companies.

- The program kicked off with a 13-week health challenge, which will be repeated annually. LiveWell resources and activities include nutrition and exercise classes, a smoking quit line, and an "activity wheel"—an online tool that estimates the number of calories a person uses when walking or running.

- Participants receive incentives and motivational prizes such as discount cards for healthy entrees at restaurants, reduced-fee gym memberships, newsletters, and recipes.

What is the impact?

- Through LiveWell, the Steps Program has served approximately 6,700 adults and young people.
- Health care providers at 30 sites refer patients to LiveWell; 11 work-site wellness programs used the LiveWell @ Work Challenge, and many community residents formed walking groups to support each other in making health behavior changes.
- Participants lost an average of two pounds during the challenge.
- Federal funds have leveraged in-kind donations worth more than \$280,000 from about 80 sponsoring organizations.

Why this program is working

According to *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*,[†] interventions that focus on changing physical activity behavior by building supportive social networks are effective in increasing physical activity, which can help control weight. Recent studies have demonstrated that weight loss and regular physical activity can delay the onset of diabetes among people at high risk of developing the disease.[‡]

* Most recent data available

† <http://www.thecommunityguide.org>

‡ http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/obe/obe_whoisatrisk.html

Alabama's River Region Steps Program

Helping control diabetes



What is the public health problem?

Diabetes and obesity are significant public health issues in Alabama's River Region. Obesity is a risk factor for diabetes, which can lead to serious complications such as blindness, kidney damage, lower-limb amputations, and cardiovascular disease. According to 2006* Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data, in the Alabama River Region's five counties (Autauga, Elmore, Lowndes, Macon, and Montgomery),

- Almost 10% of adult residents have diabetes.
- More than 67% are overweight or obese.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program partnered with the Montgomery Area Community Wellness Coalition and Baptist Center for Diabetes to train Wellness Advocates in nutrition, physical activity, disease prevention and detection, diabetes management, and cultural competency.

- Wellness Advocates are assigned to patients with diabetes to provide them with one-on-one assistance in setting health and wellness goals, self-management guidance, and vital disease prevention education.
- Diabetes monitoring kits, lancets, and testing strips are donated to clients, and they are taught how to correctly use the supplies.
- Clients meet with Wellness Advocates monthly, test their blood glucose or sugar levels four or more times a day, inject insulin as instructed or use

an insulin pump (if necessary), record and track their results, and receive intensive instructions on diabetes, nutrition, and physical activity.

What is the impact?

- Among the clients who participated in the Wellness Case Management program,
 - 76% increased their knowledge and skills in recognizing health risks associated with diabetes.
 - 38% documented a daily blood sugar check as well as a daily foot exam.
 - 27% stabilized their blood sugar levels.
- 80% of wellness case management clients were assigned to a medical home. Establishment of a medical home has been shown to decrease the instances of emergency room and inpatient visits, thereby reducing hospital costs.

Why this program is working

Early detection, improved preventive care practices, and better education on diabetes self-management can help people with diabetes control their levels of blood glucose, blood pressure, and blood lipids, which helps reduce the occurrence of diabetes complications.[†]

* Most recent data available

[†] http://www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/TipsFeel_Eng.pdf



Rochester's Steps Program

Increasing family fitness opportunities

What is the public health problem?

The increasing rate of overweight and risk for overweight among toddlers and young children is a major concern in this southern Minnesota community.

- In Minnesota, among children aged 2–5 years who participate in the state's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program, the prevalence of those who are considered overweight or at risk of becoming overweight is close to 30%, according to the 2006* Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (PedNSS).
- In addition, the 2006 PedNSS data for Minnesota's WIC program showed that nearly 25% of children aged 2–5 in Olmsted County, which is part of Rochester's Steps community, are considered overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

How Steps is responding

In August 2005, Rochester's Steps Program implemented the Fit WIC program to help parents and their children aged 3–4 become more physically active.

- Fit WIC kits offer tools and resources for play, recreation, physical activity, and structured skill-building activities. A picture activity book for non-English-speaking clients further expands the program's reach.
- Steps and the Rochester YMCA launched a related program called Fit WIC the Y's Way to give WIC parents free access to the YMCA's programs. Free child care is offered for infants and toddlers, and

older children can participate in YMCA children's programs, which include homework help. Teens have access to their own Y Space recreation area.

- Incentives are offered to encourage families to join Fit WIC the Y's Way, and the Rochester YMCA offers financial aid to families who want to continue using the facility after the 4-week program ends.

What is the impact?

To date, more than 700 Fit WIC kits have been distributed to families in Rochester.

- Participants' activity levels were examined over a 1-year period (via pre/post surveys), showing an almost 50-minute increase in the average minutes of physical activity per day per preschool child.
- Parents have also reported a 10% increase in moderate activity levels, in addition to an increase in the time spent playing with their children. Eighty-eight percent of participants report using the kit more than 2–3 days per week, on average.

Why this program is working

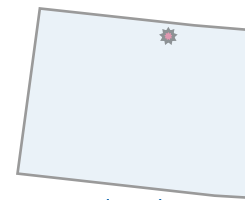
According to *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*,[†] people will become more physically active if they are given health information along with access to new or improved places where they can be active. By establishing healthy eating and physical activity habits early in life, children are more likely to carry these habits into adulthood.

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://www.thecommunityguide.org>

Weld County's Steps Program

Improving diabetes prevention and management among Hispanic residents



Colorado

What is the public health problem?

Physical inactivity and a lack of diabetes prevention and management services for Hispanics are important health issues in Weld County, Colorado.

- More than a quarter (27%) of the county population is Hispanic*—a population that is twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to have diabetes.
- Diabetes management education programs that are culturally and linguistically tailored to the Hispanic community are needed to help sustain increases in physical activity levels and healthy eating habits.
- Inactivity is related to dangerous consequences earlier in life for Hispanic women than for their non-Hispanic counterparts.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program is collaborating with local partners to provide ongoing Cultural Competency trainings related to health care delivery. These trainings, offered in conjunction with Diabetes Disparity programming, are designed to improve patient satisfaction with care in diverse populations and reduce health-related disparities. Steps also is using pláticas (small group educational chats or conversations) to deliver diabetes prevention and management education.

- A mobile medical van brings much-needed diabetes and other health services to community residents. Trained educators conduct pláticas on diabetes prevention in residents' homes and work sites—even for farm workers in fields.

- To address physical inactivity among women, Steps also supports Zumba fitness classes that incorporate Latin and international music and dance movements.

What is the impact?

- Plática Project participants increased their knowledge about ways to prevent or control diabetes by improving nutrition and increasing physical activity.
- Steps funding leveraged in-kind donations of Spanish-language media messages that directly reach the target audience with important information about diabetes prevention and treatment.
- To date, the pláticas program has reached approximately 1,900 people. Customizing the information specifically for Hispanics contributes to the community's collective knowledge about the disease.
- 225 Latinas enrolled in the Zumba classes, which they describe as “exercise in disguise.”

Why this program is working

Early detection, improved preventive care practices, and better education on diabetes self-management can help people with diabetes control their levels of blood glucose, blood pressure, and blood lipids, which helps reduce the occurrence of diabetes complications.[†]

* CDC, Snapshots of Data for Communities Nationwide, 2006.

[†] http://www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/TipsFeel_Eng.pdf



Arizona

Yuma County's Steps Program

Improving nutrition and physical activity practices at child care centers

What is the public health problem?

Unhealthy eating habits and physical inactivity pose significant health problems for Yuma County children.

- In Arizona, among children aged 2–5 years who participate in the state's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program, the prevalence of those who are considered overweight or at risk of becoming overweight is close to 29%, according to the 2006* Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System.
- In Yuma County, the problem persists as children get older—according to 2005* Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System data from Yuma County students in grades 9 through 12, nearly 36% are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

How Steps is responding

In 2005, realizing that children's unhealthy eating and physical activity habits tend to persist into adulthood, Yuma County's Steps Program began piloting the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) program, which aims to improve nutrition and physical activity environments, policies, and practices in child care centers through self-assessment and targeted technical assistance.

- The Yuma County Public Health Services District (YCPHSD) marketed the program to the state agency that administers the county's Head Start program and to child care directors. In addition,

YCPHSD registered the NAP SACC program with the statewide child care and early education development system so that child care professionals could receive continuing education credits for participating in the program. Time and resources were also dedicated for the NAP SACC facilitator to be certified as a Child Care Health Consultant.

What is the impact?

- To date, the Steps Program has implemented the NAP SACC program in 21 child care centers in five communities, reaching more than 1,130 children.
- The centers now have developed written policies on physical activity and nutritional standards and trainings for staff members and parents.
- Nutritional changes at the participating childcare centers include the reduction of sugary beverages and an increase in whole-grain foods.

Why this program is working

According to *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*,[†] 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.[‡]

* Most recent data available

† <http://www.thecommunityguide.org>

‡ <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/report/>

“ I have been coming to the Monday class for over a year. It has **absolutely** helped my strength build. My abs have benefited from the regular workouts and I am much better with endurance. The Tai Chi elements the instructor often works in are wonderful —they improve balance and help get me ‘centered’ for the week. Best of all, my clothes are fitting better! [The Steps instructor] is a real asset and we all appreciate his dedication and his encouragement.”

Beneficiary of Steps Program in Hillsborough County, Florida

“By forging new working relationships with Steps partners, the [American Diabetes Association] has been able to do more than ever before in the Steps to a Healthier San Antonio target area. Being part of Steps to a Healthier San Antonio has allowed us to bridge the gap with other organizations in the community that are working toward similar missions. As the Steps collaborative has grown stronger, our target community has grown stronger in resources and services.”

Erica Rougeau, American Diabetes Association
Associate Director of Programs



Creating Healthier **School** Environments

Schools play a critical role in shaping the health behaviors of students. Research has shown that school health programs can reduce risk behaviors among young people while also improving academic performance.²

Schools partnering with Steps communities have successfully passed policies mandating a 24/7 tobacco-free environment, developed asthma management plans, and contributed to an increase in students' fruit and vegetable consumption and opportunities for physical activity.

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy Youth: An Investment in our Nation's Future. 2007 At-A-Glance. Division of Adolescent and School Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/aag/dash.htm>.



Boston's Steps Program

Increasing healthy behaviors among students

What is the public health problem?

Eight neighborhoods in the Boston Steps intervention area collectively have the highest rates of obesity, diabetes, and asthma in the city. According to 2005* Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance data,

- Almost 16% of Boston's high school students (grades 9–12) are overweight and nearly 20% are at risk of becoming overweight.
- In addition, nearly 49% of Boston's high school students report spending at least 3 hours per day watching television.

How Steps is responding

Boston Steps, in partnership with BlueCross BlueShield of Massachusetts and Boston Public Schools, implemented the Planet Health program in schools throughout the city.

- Planet Health teaches students about nutrition and physical activity while simultaneously building skills in language arts, health, math, science, and social studies.
- School teachers and staff members receive annual training on how to implement the program, which is integrated into daily classroom learning activities.

What is the impact?

- Planet Health is being taught in 16 Boston middle schools, reaching 4,200 students. About 160 teachers

and other staff members have been trained in the curriculum.

- In a year-end survey conducted after implementation of the pilot program,
 - Educators reported an increase in staff and student knowledge of nutrition and physical activity, as well as an increase in awareness of the importance of staying healthy.
 - More than 90% of teachers reported that the curriculum had a positive impact on both students' health and their own health habits. Furthermore, the teachers said they looked forward to implementing the curriculum annually.
 - According to the Harvard University Prevention Research Center, which designed the Planet Health curriculum, every \$1.00 spent on the curriculum translates to a future savings of \$1.20 in medical costs and lost wages when the children reach middle age.†

Why this program is working

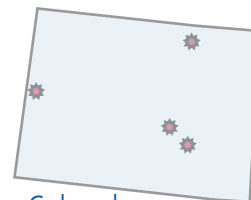
The Planet Health curriculum was designed to fit well with academic subjects. It has been shown to 1) decrease rates of obesity and disordered eating behaviors among girls, 2) significantly reduce the time that both girls and boys watch television, and 3) increase fruit and vegetable intake and knowledge of nutrition and healthy activities among both sexes. Teachers also rate the program as highly feasible, acceptable, and sustainable.

* Most recent data available

† http://www.cdc.gov/prc/stories-prevention-research/stories/planet_health.htm

Colorado's Steps Program

Working to reduce students' risky health behaviors



Colorado

What is the public health problem?

Lack of physical activity and poor diets among school students are significant public health concerns across the state. Young people in Colorado are increasingly overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

According to 2005* Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System data, more than 80% of adolescents in the state

- Do not participate in daily PE classes.
- Eat fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

How Steps is responding

Colorado's Steps Program partnered with the Colorado Department of Education and the Rocky Mountain Center for Health Promotion and Education (RMC) to implement the coordinated school health approach recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health.

- By planning and coordinating the multiple components of school nutrition, physical activity opportunities, and health services, educators can help students establish healthy lifestyle habits.
- 130 coordinated school health teams were formed. Schools were evaluated using CDC's *School Health Index* (SHI),[†] which resulted in the initiation of community walks; weight management classes; diabetes and asthma courses for students, staff, and parents; recess before lunch; breakfast in the classroom; and menu changes.

What is the impact?

- Students at 70 participating schools have realized significant benefits so far. For example, one school doubled the amount of time dedicated to PE classes and some elementary schools made recess mandatory, increasing student opportunities for physical activity.
- In Pueblo County, school lunch menus now offer twice as many fruits and vegetables and no longer include sweet desserts except on several holidays.
- Steps worked with other organizations to create a step-by-step guide (*Roadmap to Healthy Schools: The Colorado Model*[‡]) that will show schools how to implement and sustain a successful coordinated school health program. Participants included the Center for Research Strategies, the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and the RMC.

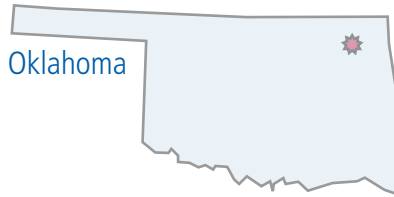
Why this program is working

The SHI, developed by CDC, is a self-assessment tool that includes research-based guidelines for school health programs. Evidence indicates that it is an effective tool in establishing the policies and practices needed to improve health-related behaviors of youth.

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx>

[‡] <http://www.rmc.org/CSH/roadmap.html>



Cherokee Nation's Steps Program

Reducing tobacco use on campus

What is the public health problem?

Tobacco use and exposure presents major health risks for students and school staff members alike. Smoking prevalence is high in Oklahoma as a whole (25%), and the smoking rate is even higher in American Indian populations (34%).*

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program helped schools reduce tobacco use by implementing the *School Health Index* (SHI)[†] and creating a healthier school environment for American Indian youth.

- In 2004, the Cherokee Nation Steps Program provided SHI training to 65 school administrators, teachers, staff members, and partnering organizations.
- All 19 schools with a predominantly American Indian student enrollment completed the SHI and created and implemented action plans for improvement.
- The Steps Program provided technical assistance, including the U.S. Lung Association's "Tools for Schools" Indoor Air Quality training, which is designed to give schools the information and skills needed to manage air quality.

What is the impact?

- Nine schools developed and implemented 24/7 tobacco-free environment policies.
- All 19 schools made other changes in the school environment, including developing overall wellness policies, offering healthier food choices in cafeterias and vending machines, and providing lighting and access to exercise facilities after school.
- As a result of Steps' efforts, the Oklahoma State Health Department requested that the Steps Program conduct an SHI train-the-trainer workshop for state health department employees.

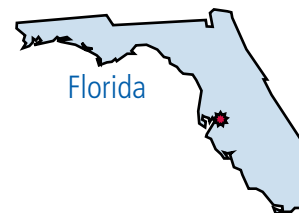
Why this program is working

The SHI, developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a self-assessment tool that includes research-based guidelines for school health programs. Evidence indicates that it is an effective tool in establishing the policies and practices needed to improve health-related behaviors of young people. In addition, implementing and enforcing a comprehensive smoking ban on school campuses reduces the risks to students from secondhand smoke and helps reduce smoking among young people.

* Oklahoma Tobacco Use Prevention Service: http://www.ok.gov/health/documents/Oklahoma%20Adults_Smoking.pdf
† <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx>

Hillsborough County's Steps Program

Educating parents and staff to help with student asthma management



What is the public health problem?

The high rate of asthma-related hospital visits among children and adolescents highlights the need for asthma management education. The Hillsborough County Steps Program reports the following:

- Nearly 26% of high school students and almost 24% of middle school students in the Steps Program's intervention area have asthma.
- During the 2004–2005 school year, there were 2,094 asthma-related school clinic visits at the 14 schools participating in the Steps-supported program.
- In 2004, the local children's hospital reported 1,014 asthma-related emergency room visits.

How Steps is responding

The Hillsborough County Steps Program provides a community- and hospital-based educational program that teaches parents and school staff members how to help with students' asthma management.

- Program activities include 1) asthma assessments and referrals to services that help reduce exposure to dust and other environmental asthma triggers by providing free mattress and pillow cover replacements; 2) in-school education to increase staff awareness of environmental asthma triggers; and 3) training for child care and health care providers on environmental changes that can reduce exposure to harmful allergens and secondhand smoke.

What is the impact?

- 1,100 school employees have been trained, and operational practices at 10 schools have been modified to allow students to use peak flow meters (portable, hand-held devices that measure one's breathing level) on school premises. This can help students recognize early symptoms that may be signs of worsening asthma.
- The 15 training sessions that were conducted for 136 child care and day care directors resulted in a 28% gain in knowledge about asthma, its related illnesses, and exposures to environmental triggers.
- Exposure to environmental asthma triggers was reduced through the distribution of 585 mattress and pillow covers to 237 residents.

Why this program is working

The use of asthma action plans and self-management training, as well as school-based educational programs, have been shown to increase knowledge about asthma management and behaviors that can control asthma, reduce acute care visits, and improve one's quality of life. Also, studies suggest that either peak flow monitoring or symptom monitoring, if taught and done correctly, can be effective in managing asthma symptoms.[†]

* Most recent data available

[†] http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/asthma/pdf/Addressing_Asthma.pdf



Pinellas County's Steps Program

Helping schools offer more lunchtime fruit and vegetable choices

What is the public health problem?

Overweight and obesity among the county's school students is an important public health issue.

- In 2005, Pinellas County school officials reported that 27% of elementary school students were overweight, according to body mass index measurements taken on students enrolled in physical education classes.
- According to 2005* Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System data, more than 27% of Pinellas County high school students were either overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program implemented a salad program that offers convenient, nutritious prepackaged fruit and vegetable salads in school cafeterias.

- School administrators and cafeteria managers are educated about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, and the food service staff receives recipes and training on how to prepare nutritious salads.
- At the beginning of each school year, local vegetable distributors set up a farmer's market display at area schools to let students touch and taste different fruits and vegetables.

What is the impact?

- 84% of the schools participate in the salad program and 90% of the students and staff participate in the farmer's markets.
- Fruit and vegetable consumption has increased among elementary school students and staff. More than 3,750 students and staff members increased their intake of fruits and vegetables during the third year of the program.
- The Pinellas County School District ranked first in the state and was tied for second in the nation by the 2006 Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine's School Lunch Report Card. The district was recognized for encouraging the consumption of healthy foods and educating students about nutrition.
- The salad program has become so popular that it has expanded to include schools in other parts of the county.
- The school district also adopted a policy to provide physical education 5 days a week for all elementary school students.

Why this program is working

Offering healthier food items in schools may lead to increased consumption of healthier foods in a student population. Healthy eating in childhood and adolescence is important for proper growth and development and can help prevent health problems such as obesity and diabetes.†

* Most recent data available

† <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx>

Rockland County's Steps Program

Improving students' health and academics



What is the public health problem?

Inactivity and unhealthy eating habits among the county's young people increase their risks for overweight and obesity. According to data from the 2005* Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System,

- 54% of Rockland County students did not meet currently recommended physical activity levels (includes both school and leisure-time activity).
- Only about 4% of Rockland County high school students attended physical education classes daily.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program launched the Learning in Motion: Physical Activity, the Brain, and Achievement curriculum, which promotes physical activity as a way to encourage academic achievement.

- This innovative curriculum trains K–12 teachers on the importance of proper nutrition for optimal brain function and how to integrate physical activity with language arts, math, social studies, science, and health lessons. Teachers use fun, interactive assignments that encourage movement to improve students' memory and address their different learning styles.
- Goals of the program are to reduce sedentary behavior during the school day, to enhance students' overall understanding of subject matter content, and to help students develop lifelong healthy behaviors such as being physically active.

What is the impact?

- Learning in Motion enhances academic performance and promotes healthy behaviors that can help prevent childhood overweight. Since 2004, more than 150 teachers in Rockland County's nine school districts have been trained to incorporate physical activity into their lesson plans. The program is used at 47 schools, reaching more than 14,200 students.
- In a follow-up survey at the end of the school year, 95% of teachers said they used physical activity in their classrooms at least several times a week; 85% said they used it daily or several times per day.
- According to teacher surveys, students reported feeling more energized, having better self-esteem, and being more alert during classes.

Why this program is working

Training recommended in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People*[†] results in active involvement by the entire school staff in helping sustain a healthy environment that promotes physical activity.

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00046823.htm>



San Antonio's Steps Program

Helping schools create student asthma action plans

What is the public health problem?

Asthma is a significant health issue for San Antonio's student population.

- The San Antonio Steps Program reports that 96% of students in the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) are Hispanic or African American—populations disproportionately affected by asthma.
- In 2004, a local children's hospital recorded more than 500 admissions and 3,400 emergency room visits that were asthma related.

How Steps is responding

In 2005, the Steps Program collaborated with the SAISD, and other partners, to implement an asthma action plan project for asthmatic children required to take medication during school.

- A training session was held for school nurses and nurse practitioners on the use of asthma action plans and asthma equipment.
- Children were given individual asthma action plans, in both English and Spanish, for their physicians to complete; the plans were then returned to the school clinic. Children were also given tools for managing their asthma, such as peak flow meters (hand-held devices used to measure one's breathing levels) and spacers (devices that assist in inhaling asthma medications).

What is the impact?

- SAISD now has about 400 asthma action plans on file, compared with about 20 plans on file at all campuses in prior years.
- During the 2005–2006 school year, 450 peak flow meters and 500 spacers were distributed to SAISD children who did not previously have access to them at school.
- In a survey of school nurses, 57% and 46%, respectively, strongly agreed that students who received spacers and peak flow meters for use at school benefited.
- 53% of the school nurses also agreed that having the action plans improved their ability to manage students' asthma symptoms.

Why this program is working

School-based education programs and the use of asthma action plans and self-management training have been shown to increase knowledge about asthma management and ways to control asthma, reduce acute care visits, and improve one's quality of life. Also, studies suggest that either peak flow monitoring or symptom monitoring, if taught and done correctly, can be effective in managing asthma symptoms.*

* http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/asthma/pdf/Addressing_Asthma.pdf

Alabama's Southeast Region Steps Program

Promoting healthy behaviors among students and staff members



What is the public health problem?

Chronic disease rates in Pike and Barbour Counties are among the highest in Alabama.

- Five selected schools in these counties revealed that there was no wellness policy in place for students and staff members.
- In Alabama as a whole, 2005* Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System data show that nearly 33% of the state's high school students are overweight or at risk for overweight, 24% have doctor-diagnosed asthma, about 24% are current smokers, and about 85% eat fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program is actively working with schools to help prevent or control chronic diseases among young people. In partnership with district PE teachers, nutritional program personnel, and students, the Steps Program helped implement the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *School Health Index* (SHI)[†] at the five schools without wellness policies. Concerted efforts are now being made to improve students' and staff members' diets and physical activity levels and provide tobacco-use prevention and asthma education activities.

What is the impact?

- A local vending company and individual schools began working together to begin offering juices, smaller food portions, and healthier snacks.

- Steps Program funding allowed the PE department at one high school to offer an adaptive PE class for disabled children for the first time. At another school, Steps funding was used to implement a special curriculum that focuses on developing lifelong, enjoyable sports skills among students of all ability levels.
- All five selected schools have implemented policies that ban staff members from smoking on campus.
- Students who participated in the American Lung Association's Open Airways for Schools curriculum gained important knowledge—a 13% increase in the percentage of students who could identify when they were having an asthma attack, a 24% increase in knowing what to do when they were coughing or sneezing, and an almost 40% increase in being able to tell someone when they needed to go to the hospital.

Why this program is working

The SHI, developed by CDC, is a self-assessment tool that includes research-based guidelines for school health programs. Evidence indicates that it is an effective tool in establishing the policies and practices needed to improve health-related behaviors of youth.

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx>

“Prior to partnering with Steps, ALA made minor advances with our asthma outreach efforts. By adopting new programs, policies, and practices via an integrated systems approach, changes that have been achieved as a result of this comprehensive strategy are sustainable and are already demonstrating lower asthma hospitalization rates in our community.”

*Laura Chapman, Senior Program Director,
American Lung Association of the Central States (ALA)*



Working in Health Care Settings to Improve Patient Care

Changing the health care system to improve chronic disease care helps promote healthy behaviors and reduce complications. However, in many cases, the health care system does not allow for opportunities to encourage healthy behaviors, and prevention opportunities are often missed.³

Steps communities are effectively collaborating with health care facilities to develop systems that better monitor and track the delivery of chronic disease care and produce better health outcomes among patients.

3. Hung DY, Rundall TG, et al. Rethinking prevention in primary care: applying the Chronic Care Model to address health risk behaviors. *The Milbank Quarterly* 2007;85:1.



Chautauqua County's Steps Program

Educating patients on tobacco use and cessation

What is the public health problem?

Tobacco use is a significant public health problem among adults in Chautauqua County. Nearly 23% of Chautauqua County residents reported being current smokers in 2006, according to data from the 2006* Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

How Steps is responding

The Chautauqua County Steps Program, in collaboration with the local Tobacco Control Program and hospital staff members, helped implement a new policy at the Women's Christian Association (WCA) Hospital that requires health care providers to directly address patients' tobacco use and cessation efforts.

- Health care providers from a variety of disciplines were trained by Wellness Coordinators and the Steps Community Program Facilitator to follow the 5 A's intervention model with every patient. The 5 A's model, a 2-minute strategy shown to increase tobacco cessation, encourages health care providers to 1) ask patients about tobacco use, 2) advise patients to quit, 3) assess patients' willingness to quit, 4) assist in cessation attempts, and 5) arrange for patient follow-up. Providers are also encouraged to refer patients to the state Quitline, where intensive counseling can be provided.

- The WCA Hospital implemented the 2-minute intervention strategy, revising the patient intake form to reflect the patient's tobacco-use status and providing smoking-cessation materials and referrals to the NYS Smokers' Quitline when applicable.

What is the impact?

- As of May 2006, more than 547 health care providers were trained on the 2-minute intervention, and the WCA Hospital changed its patient intake and education forms to reflect the new process.
- As a result of the new policy, total calls to the NYS Smokers' Quitline from health care provider referrals quadrupled from 2005 to 2006 and resulted in a 50% increase in calls compared with a neighboring county that has similar demographics.
- The Chautauqua County Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data show that nearly 29% of adults smoked during 2004–2005. This percentage decreased during 2005–2006 to about 24%.

Why this program is working

Brief interventions promoting smoking cessation, such as the 5 A's model, have been shown to be effective in helping smokers quit.[†]

* Most recent data available

[†] http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco/treating_tobacco_use.pdf

Salinas's Steps Program

Improving the delivery of diabetes care



What is the public health problem?

Diabetes is a growing public health concern in Salinas. If not properly managed, diabetes can lead to serious complications such as blindness, kidney damage, lower-limb amputations, and cardiovascular disease. According to 2006* Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data,

- 7% of adults in Salinas reported that they have doctor-diagnosed diabetes.
- Nearly 64% classified themselves as either overweight or obese, placing them at risk of developing diabetes.

How Steps is responding

An effective and sustainable system that provides enhanced treatment and diabetes self-management skills for patients was created.

- The Salinas Steps Program worked with seven local Federally Qualified Health Centers and community-based health care providers to implement a Patient Electronic Care System that covers more than 31,000 patients.
- Participating clinics document and monitor patient health information, such as when patients are due to have recommended foot and eye examinations or A1c tests. Clinics also identify monthly outcome measures to track and provide follow-up assistance.
- Uninsured patients are enrolled in reduced-cost or free prescription assistance programs.

- Quality assurance studies are conducted regularly to ensure providers are helping patients effectively manage their diabetes.

What is the impact?

Participating clinics have shown significant progress in helping patients manage their diabetes. From September 2003 to April 2006, the percentage of patients who had

- Controlled blood pressure increased from 32% to 40%.
- Dilated eye exams increased from 24% to 48%.
- Foot exams increased from 25% to 32%.

Why this program is working

Early detection, improved preventive care practices, and better education on diabetes self-management can help people with diabetes control their levels of blood glucose, blood pressure, and blood lipids, which helps reduce the occurrence of diabetes complications. The Task Force on Community Preventive Services found that disease management interventions are effective in improving glycemic control among people with diabetes.[†]

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/diabetes/dm-int-disease-mgt.pdf>

“ For the first time, through the Steps to a Healthier Cleveland Program, we actually had a common interest with the city’s Department of Economic Development and we’ve been able to leverage some resources—especially with small businesses.”

Jennifer Scofield, Coordinator,
Cleveland Steps Program



Helping **Work Sites** Improve Employee Health

Work sites are important partners in addressing chronic disease prevention. The majority of adults spend time at the workplace, and work sites shoulder almost one-third of the total national costs related to obesity, diabetes, and other conditions. Multi-component work-site health promotion programs have been effective in increasing healthy behaviors and reducing health-related costs.⁴

Steps communities are creating healthy work sites through nontraditional partnerships with companies and organizations involved in nonhealth enterprises—such as transportation agencies, chambers of commerce, the media, and local businesses—to make work sites healthier and to improve employee health.

4. Goetzel RZ and Ozminkowski RJ. What's holding you back? Why should (or shouldn't) employers invest in health promotion programs for their workers. *NC Med J.* 2006;67(Nov/Dec):6.



Austin's Steps Program

Supporting healthy work sites and reducing health care costs

What is the public health problem?

Obesity contributes to high rates of absenteeism and increased health care costs. The costs of obesity (excluding overweight) at a firm with 1,000 employees are estimated to be \$285,000 per year. Approximately 30% of this total results from increased absenteeism.*

- According to 2006[†] Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data, about half of adults in Austin do not engage in 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity 5 or more days per week.
- Almost 37% of adults in Austin said they were overweight, and more than 26% said they were obese.

How Steps is responding

To help reduce obesity rates, the Steps Program supports a city work-site wellness program that provides transit operators access to exercise facilities, healthy foods, and health assessments to help them manage their weight.

- The Steps Program partners with Capital Metro, the Austin Transit authority, and its wellness services vendor to provide consultations with dietitians and personal trainers, a 24-hour company fitness center, and personalized health assessments.
- Through the wellness program, transit operators also receive discounts for purchasing healthier foods in the company's cafeteria and can enroll in a myriad of weight and nutrition management programs.

- Cash incentives reward employees for joining weight-loss programs, quitting tobacco use, using the on-site gym, and achieving other health-related goals.

What is the impact?

- Since 2004, annual increases in Capital Metro's health care costs have slowed substantially. Total costs increased a little less than 10% between 2004 and 2005, compared with an almost 27% increase between 2003 and 2004.
- Program participants report significant improvements in physical activity, healthy food consumption, weight loss, blood pressure management, stress levels, and overall general health.
- The purchase of "healthy choice" options in the employee cafeteria increased by 172%.
- Employee absenteeism rates—an indicator of worker job satisfaction and health—decreased by 44%, from a high of about 12% in March 2004 to slightly less than 7% in June 2006.

Why this program is working

Studies show that comprehensive work-site health programs focused on lifestyle changes lead to improvements in employees' health[‡] and a high return on employers' investments in terms of lower health care costs.*

* American Journal of Health Promotion. 2005; 20:45–51.

† Most recent data available

‡ http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/library/toolkit/pdfs/six_step_guide.pdf

Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan Counties' Steps Program

Creating healthier working environments



Washington

What is the public health problem?

Obesity, diabetes, and tobacco use are significant public health issues in this Steps community.

- The obesity rate among adults in Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan Counties is just over 23%, according to data from the 2006* Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.
- Among adults in the Steps intervention area, the diabetes rate is nearly 7%.
- Additionally, 18% of these adults reported that they were current smokers.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program is partnering with the business community to support healthy work-site activities.

- Because most adults spend many hours each week at work, work sites are ideal places to help employees exercise more, eat healthier diets, and quit smoking. The Steps Program partnered with the local Chamber of Commerce to establish the Healthiest Business Challenge, where companies and their employees compete by participating in healthy work-site activities.
- Businesses are grouped by size, and points are awarded for smoking cessation programs, healthy meeting foods policies, use of stairs instead of the elevator, establishment or modification of a written tobacco-use policy, and participation in a work-site walking program.
- Winners of the Healthiest Business Challenge receive an award at the annual Chamber of

Commerce banquet. All participating businesses receive recognition in a local business journal.

What is the impact?

Since 2005, 34 businesses and almost 6,750 employees completed the challenge. These businesses implemented 33 new work-site policies or upgraded existing ones related to nutrition, physical activity, or smoking cessation. For example,

- A dental office established new policies that allow physical activity breaks and encourage serving healthy foods and drinks at office meetings.
- A health care provider implemented a policy allowing 30 minutes a day, up to 2 hours a week, for consistent physical activity during regular work hours, with supervisor approval.
- An educational organization adopted nutritional guidelines for items allowed in its vending machines.

Why this program is working

According to *Reducing the Risk of Heart Disease and Stroke—A Six-Step Guide for Employers*,[†] comprehensive work-site health programs focused on lifestyle changes can lead to improvements in health behaviors among employees.

* Most recent data available

[†] http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/library/toolkit/pdfs/six_step_guide.pdf



Jefferson County's Steps Program

Promoting healthy behaviors among school employees

What is the public health problem?

Chronic diseases related to unhealthy lifestyle behaviors concern both the public health community and school officials in Jefferson County.

- Among Jefferson County residents, only about 25% reported eating five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, according to 2006* Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data.
- About 40% reported being physically inactive.
- Nearly 8% reported having diabetes, about 38% reported being overweight, and nearly 25% reported being obese.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program helped implement a school wellness program for the school staff to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors.

- Jefferson County's Steps Program helped a rural school district set up a School Health Advisory Committee and develop an action plan for schools. After implementing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *School Health Index* (SHI)[†], staff wellness was identified as an area in need of improvement.

- Health promotion activities such as after-hours walking groups and classes on proper nutrition were conducted over a 2-year period.

What is the impact?

- 105 district staff members have participated and lost a total of 430 pounds.
- Expenditures by the district's self-funded health care plan decreased, resulting in a reduction in employees' health care insurance premiums. In fact, the Board of Education was able to waive one month of insurance premiums for everyone, totaling almost \$300,000 in savings.

Why this program is working

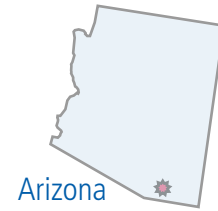
The SHI, developed by CDC, is a self-assessment tool that includes research-based guidelines for school health programs. Evidence has shown that it is an effective tool in establishing the policies and practices needed to improve health-related behaviors of young people and school staff members. In addition, studies indicate that comprehensive work-site health programs focused on lifestyle behavior change lead to improvements in health behaviors among employees and a return on investment for employers.

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx>

Santa Cruz County's Steps Program

Improving the health of both employees and students



What is the public health problem?

Both students and school employees need information and services to help them change unhealthy behaviors and improve their health.

- Among Santa Cruz County adolescents, about 36% reported watching 3 or more hours of television a day and 12% reported being overweight, according to data from the 2005* Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.
- Among Santa Cruz County adults, almost 8% reported having diabetes and nearly 38% reported being overweight, according to data from the 2006* Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program implemented multi-component school-based interventions and policies aimed at improving employee and student health.

- *School Health Index* (SHI)[†] workshops were held at all schools in the area's two school districts.
- Health-risk appraisals were conducted for more than 520 school staff members.
- Improvements were made in a work-site wellness program that was developed in collaboration with the Arizona School Board Insurance Trust.

What is the impact?

- 95% of schools in the two school districts completed the SHI modules and wrote action plans that guided the development of federally mandated[‡] wellness policies.
- One of the two school districts started allowing students to have active play time at recess in 100% of its elementary schools.
- At three schools, the health-risk appraisals were used to establish staff wellness programs that addressed diabetes and other diseases.
- A "Call-a-Nurse" program was started for employees to discuss health issues, and an employee assistance program was re-implemented to help staff members better manage their health risks.

Why this program is working

The SHI is an effective self-assessment tool in establishing the policies and practices needed to improve health-related behaviors of young people and school staff members.

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx>

[‡] http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/Wellness_policyrequirements.html

Conclusion

Urgent problems require urgent solutions. Today, chronic diseases account for 7 in 10 deaths and affect the quality of life of 90 million Americans. The increasing burden of chronic diseases and unhealthy lifestyles in the United States requires immediate and sustained action from all sectors of society. The Steps communities, in collaboration with many other institutions and organizations, are taking action and making long-lasting, sustainable changes that are needed to prevent chronic diseases at the local level. Through their work in communities, schools, work sites, and health care settings across the country, local Steps programs are helping people control their weight, better manage their diabetes and asthma, and start practicing healthier behaviors—eating more nutritious foods, engaging in more physical activity, and stopping tobacco use.

Using key principles and proven strategies, such as responding to community needs, reaching diverse population groups, and creating nontraditional partnerships, CDC's Steps Program will continue to provide a "tipping point" for the nation by supporting communities that show what can be done at the local level to prevent chronic diseases among all Americans. Steps communities, in collaboration with other local organizations, will continue to take the kinds of actions needed to reverse the increases in chronic disease rates and improve people's chances of making healthier lifestyle choices.

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Photo Credit

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“ In today’s environment, programs like Steps are vital to our society. I dropped 47 pounds . . . and my blood pressure and cholesterol levels dropped too. It was a blessing to me when I needed it most.”

Reggie Labare, Beneficiary of New York’s
Broome County Steps Program

