



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/>