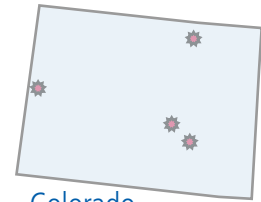


Colorado's Steps Program

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>