



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/healthyouth/asthma/pdf/Addressing_Asthma.pdf