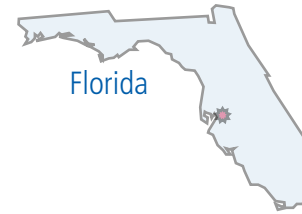


Hillsborough County's Steps Program

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