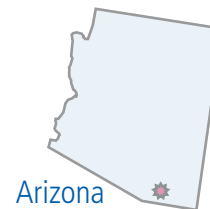


Santa Cruz County's Steps Program

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