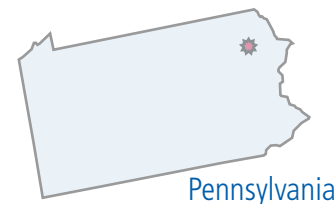


Luzerne County's Steps Program

Increasing the community's exposure to chronic disease prevention messages



Pennsylvania

What is the public health problem?

Overweight, obesity, diabetes, and asthma are growing concerns in Pennsylvania's Luzerne County.

- According to 2006* Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, almost 37% of the county's adult residents reported being overweight and more than 26% reported being obese.
- Nearly 9% reported having doctor-diagnosed diabetes, which is associated with overweight, and more than 10% reported having asthma.
- In the 2005* BRFSS survey, almost half of county residents reported getting no regular physical activity, which is a risk factor for becoming overweight or obese.

How Steps is responding

Luzerne County's Steps Program partnered with a local television station, WNEP, to create public service announcements (PSAs) promoting healthy, active lifestyles.

- WNEP highlighted the Steps Program in a major newscast and donated booth space during its annual Home and Backyard Show, allowing the Steps staff to provide chronic disease prevention information to more than 5,000 residents.
- Over a 6-month period, 13 different media outlets printed or broadcast news about the Steps Program. To date, 255 television PSAs (or "spots") that publicize ways to increase physical activity levels or control asthma have aired on WNEP.

What is the impact?

- WNEP has provided up to two free television spots for every paid spot that airs—almost doubling viewer exposure to health and active lifestyle messages at no additional cost.
- Steps funding was leveraged by 600% through sponsor donations that covered production and airtime costs. WNEP also donated additional in-kind services.
- Media coverage keeps the Steps Program's healthy lifestyle messages in the public eye, increasing people's knowledge about how small changes in nutrition and physical activity can help prevent many chronic conditions, including obesity, diabetes, and asthma.

Why this program is working

According to *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*,[†] mass media campaigns, when combined with other community-wide programs, are effective in addressing some chronic disease risk factors. Also, community health may be enriched by developing or strengthening social networks, which makes group activities more available to community members and enhances their collective ability to bring about change.

* Most recent data available

[†] <http://www.thecommunityguide.org>