

# The Steps Program in Cleveland, Ohio

Funding Period: 2004–2009

CDC's Steps Program funds states, cities, and tribal groups to implement community-based chronic disease prevention programs to reduce the burden of obesity, diabetes, and asthma by addressing three related risk factors: physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use. Steps-funded programs are showing what can be done locally in schools, work sites, communities, and health care settings to promote healthier lifestyles and help people make long-lasting and sustainable changes that can reduce their risk for chronic diseases.

## Background

The Steps Program in Cleveland, Ohio, is working in all four Steps focus areas to build healthier communities throughout the city. Cleveland is home to more than 117 identified ethnic groups and has 36 distinct neighborhoods. Programmatic efforts are focused on people most affected by chronic diseases, including racial and ethnic minority groups, low-income persons, those living in at-risk neighborhoods, and the medically underserved. In the intervention area, 54% of residents are black or African American, 32% live below the federal poverty level, and 48% of children live in poverty.

## Spotlight on Success

- The Steps Program in Cleveland has partnered with the Ohio State University Extension Service's Community Gardening program to start community gardens in targeted neighborhoods. This partnership surpassed its goal of starting 8 new gardens in 2006 by creating 13 new gardens and engaging 624 new gardeners. In 2007, more new gardens were cultivated in additional neighborhoods. The words of Monroe Cuff, a community gardener, speak to the power of community gardens: "This garden changed my life." Read this success story in *The Steps Program in Action*, available at [www.cdc.gov/steps/success\\_stories/pdf/cleveland.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/steps/success_stories/pdf/cleveland.pdf).
- In addition, the Steps Program in Cleveland has partnered with the Cleveland Municipal School District to support the district's comprehensive health plan. Through this partnership, Steps brought physical activity, nutrition, tobacco-free lifestyle, diabetes and asthma management, and safety programs to more than 13,000 students and 5,300 staff members. While Steps' efforts were focused on 16 schools, many school-based activities had a wide-reaching impact by serving the entire district, which included more than 57,000 students.

## Community Partnerships

In addition to a leadership team of 21 members representing all sectors of the Cleveland community, Cleveland's Steps Program is guided by active community partnerships. The community partnerships include both traditional and nontraditional partners and comprise 236 people, all of whom share a common vision of a healthier Cleveland. Partnership members convene on a quarterly basis to learn about a Steps-related topic and engage in group discussion about the program's collective progress and impact. Many individual partnership members participate in one of five Steps work groups: health care providers and community health workers, communications, faith-based, school-based, and work site. The community partnerships are also working to establish a long-term model for sustaining the Steps Program movement.

## Contact

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