

The Steps Program in Oklahoma's Cherokee Nation

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 Cherokee Nation Steps Program is building healthier American Indian communities in Oklahoma by working with schools, health care providers, work sites, and tribal leaders in Cherokee, Adair, Mayes, Sequoyah, and Delaware counties. These five contiguous counties are located in northeastern Oklahoma and are part of the Cherokee Nation's 14-county Tribal Jurisdictional Service Area. Steps efforts are focused on the significant health impact of chronic diseases and health disparities among approximately 49,000 American Indian residents, representing 26% of the total population in these areas. The 5-county area includes 68 elementary, 16 middle, and 25 high schools, which are ideal places to reach young people with health promotion messages.

Spotlight on Success

- The Cherokee Nation Steps Program provided technical assistance, including the American Lung Association's Tools for Schools Indoor Air Quality training, to 19 schools with predominantly American Indian student populations. All 19 schools made policy or environmental changes, including developing overall wellness policies, offering healthier choices in vending machines and cafeterias, and providing lighting for and access to exercise facilities after school. Nine schools developed and implemented 24/7 tobacco-free environment policies. The Cherokee Nation Steps Program also provided School Health Index (SHI) training to 65 school administrators, teachers, staff members, and partnering organizations. All 19 schools completed the SHI and created and carried out action plans for improvement. Read this success story in *The Steps Program in Action*, available at www.cdc.gov/steps/success_stories/pdf/choerokee.pdf.
- The Cherokee Nation Wings physical activity program, supported by Steps, is open to everyone in the community, and more than 1,000 active members have registered. Cherokee Nation Wings plans and conducts physical activity events such as local road races and community hiking, bowling, skating, and swimming activities.

Community Partnerships

Partnerships have been an important component in the success of the Cherokee Nation Steps Program. The Cherokee Steps partnerships comprise both traditional and nontraditional partners, including health care providers, county health departments, cooperative extension services, schools, the state department of health, local businesses, and other community programs and agencies. These partnerships have helped expand the reach and success of the Steps Program far beyond what it could have accomplished on its own.

Contact

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