

The Steps Program in Thurston County, Washington

Funding Period: 2003–2008

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

With a population of 238,000, Thurston County is the sixth most populous county in the State of Washington, with a mixture of cities, small towns, and rural areas. The county is a center of regional employment, with high concentrations of public-sector and smaller business employers. The median household income is \$49,673; nearly 11% of county residents live below the federal poverty level (2005 U.S. Census Bureau estimates). The Thurston County Steps Program serves the entire county population, with various interventions focused on specific subpopulations (e.g., prevention of overweight among infants and preschool-age children; promotion of physical activity—especially walking—for older adults and women ages 30 to 59).

Spotlight on Success

- The Steps Program in Thurston County has worked closely with a regional association of health care providers to offer learning opportunities for physicians and their staff members to become more skilled in preventing and treating chronic diseases, particularly type 2 diabetes. The Diabetes Collaborative has involved 13 providers over the past 3 years; these providers now have more than 1300 patients entered into chronic disease registries.
- The Steps Program in Thurston County, in close partnership with its local Chamber of Commerce, established the WorkWell program, recognizing the commitment and actual changes that employers—primarily small private businesses—are making to support healthy eating and physical activity during work hours. This work-site program recognized 11 employers, affecting a workforce of more than 3600, for leadership commitment and improvements in both healthy eating and physical activity during its first year (2006–2007).

Community Partnerships

The Thurston County Steps Program began with a county-wide, multisector leadership consortium and later evolved into more focused advisory groups: the *Active Communities work group*, with the regional planning agency, Intercity Transit, a local trails advocacy organization, the YMCA, and neighborhood projects as partners; the *Healthy Schools work group*, involving three school districts and the region's educational service district; the *WorkWell work group*, with representatives from private sector businesses, the chamber of commerce, the local hospital, local government, and local nonprofit service agencies; the *Healthy Aging Coalition*, with the region's agency on aging, a regional senior games organization, the main local hospital, and the local senior services agency as partners; the *Healthy Food Labeling work group*, which includes representatives from the state restaurant association, the state schools superintendent's office, a local school district, the primary hospital's food service director, and a state office cafeteria services agency; and the *Local Planned Care Initiative (Diabetes Collaborative) planning group*, which includes two regional physicians networks and the primary hospital's diabetes center.

Contact

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