

The Steps Program in Alabama's River Region

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 River Region Steps Program serves Autauga, Elmore, Lowndes, Macon, and Montgomery counties, with a combined population of 384,342. About 28% of the region's residents have incomes below the federal poverty level. Lowndes County is predominantly rural with only four practicing physicians, and Macon County currently has the third-highest diabetes rate in the nation. In Montgomery County, about 24% of adults are overweight or obese; this county ranks in the top 10% of Alabama counties with high diabetes death rates. The River Region Steps Program focuses on individuals and families at risk for diabetes, asthma, and obesity; this group includes minority populations, rural residents, and school-aged children.

Spotlight on Success

- Through a collaboration between the Montgomery Area Community Wellness Coalition—the River Region Steps Program's lead agency—and the Baptist Center for Diabetes, the Steps Program trained Wellness Advocates in diabetes management as part of the Wellness Case Management program. The Advocates provide one-on-one counseling to area residents with diabetes. By improving their knowledge of diabetes self-management, participants were able to stabilize their blood sugar levels. Conducting daily blood sugar checks as well as foot exams resulted in fewer visits to the hospital. Read this success story in *The Steps Program in Action*, available at www.cdc.gov/steps/success_stories/pdf/river_region.pdf.
- The Healthy Steps Challenge (HSC) physical activity intervention and work-site wellness program enrolled 21 work sites and 2,000 employees. Even the smallest employee participation rate among HSC work sites was 51%, and 54% of all participating employees reached or exceeded their physical activity goals. Through the StairWELL Campaign, point-of-decision prompts were placed in the work sites to promote the use of stairs instead of the elevator. In addition, the River Region Steps Program enrolled two universities in the HSC—Auburn University—Montgomery and Faulkner University—where 50% of participants met or exceeded their physical activity goals.

Community Partnerships

Partnerships greatly contribute to the success of the River Region Steps Program. Community partners include representatives from the area's public school systems, the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce and County Commission, several area universities, state and local medical associations, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, youth-serving organizations, Nutribytes, the Tuskegee Area Health Education Center, the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters Program, the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Southeast Alabama Steps Program, the American Heart Association, the Alabama Medicaid Agency, and Youth Enhancement and Family Services, Inc.

Contact

Steps to a HealthierAL—River Region
Montgomery Area Community Wellness Coalition
Telephone: 334-293-6502
www.healthystepsalabama.org/steps.asp