

The Steps Program in Austin–Travis County, Texas

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

The Steps Program in Austin is building healthier communities in a contiguous geographic area of 20 Austin ZIP codes by working with schools, health care providers, work sites, and community leaders. The intervention area includes more than 460,000 residents, 9 of the city's 11 Federally Qualified Health Centers, and 117 schools. Programmatic efforts are focused on people most burdened by chronic diseases, including low-income children and adults. This is important because, in 2005, nearly 16% of residents in Travis County lived below the federal poverty level.

Spotlight on Success

- The Steps Program in Austin works closely with the city transportation authority, Capital Metro, and its health and wellness vendor, Health & Lifestyles. A work-site wellness program provides consultations with dietitians and personal trainers, a 24-hour company fitness center, and personalized health assessments. Program participants reported significant improvements in physical activity, healthy food consumption, weight loss, blood pressure management, stress levels, and overall general health. Total health care costs increased only 9.6% from 2004 to 2005, compared with 26.8% from 2003 to 2004, and employee absenteeism rates—an indicator of worker job satisfaction and health—also decreased more than 44%, from a high of about 12% in March 2004 to 7% in June 2006. Read this success story in *The Steps Program in Action*, available at www.cdc.gov/steps/success_stories/pdf/austin.pdf.
- The Steps Program in Austin works with community health centers, hospital systems, large provider systems, and private care providers through the Austin Asthma Coalition and the Central Texas Diabetes Coalition. In addition, the annual Diabetes Summit and annual Asthma Summit allow the Austin Steps Program to reach more than 500 providers with updates on new best practices in screening, diagnosis, and treating patients and with referral resources throughout the community. Making needed policy changes within health care settings, such as initiating policies that refer all people with pre-diabetes to local physical activity resources, has been a significant priority in the work that Steps does with health care providers.

Community Partnerships

Community collaboration and guidance are essential to the success of the Steps Program in Austin. The Austin Steps partnerships comprise health care providers, health plan providers, neighborhood and community organizations, faith-based organizations, cooperative extensions, local universities, community members, and Steps partner agencies. In addition, the Steps Program works with the Austin Asthma Coalition, the Central Texas Diabetes Coalition, the Austin Nutrition Work Group, and the Austin Physical Activity Work Group. These coalitions and work groups include health care providers, health plan providers, state and local health and social service agencies, and disease and behavior specialists.

Contact

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