

The Steps Program in Southeast Alaska

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 Southeast Alaska is building healthier communities by working with schools, health care providers, work sites, and community leaders. Programmatic efforts are focused on Alaska Natives and rural residents, who are most affected by chronic diseases. Demographics supporting the need for intervention include the significant population of Alaska Natives in this area—primarily the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimpshian.

Spotlight on Success

The Sitka School District worked with the Steps Program to improve the quality of foods and beverages offered in school vending machines. Prior to 2007, only federal regulations were in place for monitoring vending machine offerings in the middle and high schools. Over the course of a year, the school district formed a wellness team and held regular meetings to educate school leaders and staff and instill confidence that significant revenues would not be lost. They presented studies showing that over time, revenue from regulated vending machines recover, and offering healthy foods and drinks can be just as profitable as offering less healthy food choices. In addition, the wellness team and project coordinator worked with the regional distributor of the vending machines on how to implement these changes as smoothly as possible. Schools are now giving students access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students. Schools are trying to accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning and will provide students with clean, safe, and pleasant settings and adequate time for eating. The schools will also limit the marketing of less healthy foods and beverages to students.

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are integral to the success of the Steps Program in Southeast Alaska. The Steps leadership team is comprised of state, regional, and local representatives. The members represent Senior Services; Head Start; Goldbelt, Inc.; Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium prevention programs; the State Health Program; and the Department of Health and Social Services. These partnerships guide the work plan for the Steps Program in Southeast Alaska.

Contact

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