

The Steps Program in the Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona

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

A sovereign nation residing on a portion of its people's original Sonoran desert lands, the Tohono O'odham Nation is organized into 11 districts. The land lies within three Arizona counties: Pima, Pinal, and Maricopa. The main reservation is located between Tucson and Ajo, with its administrative center in the town of Sells. A few of the districts are not contiguous with the main reservation: The San Xavier District southwest of Tucson, the San Lucy District near the city of Gila Bend, and the Florence Village near the city of Florence. The reservation's land area is 4,453 square miles, the second-largest Indian reservation in size in the United States (after the Navajo). Approximately 18,000 people live on the reservation today, significantly more than the 10,787 residents reported in the 2000 U.S. Census. Tohono O'odham Nation Steps Program efforts are focused on the significant health impact of chronic diseases and health disparities in this American Indian population.

Spotlight on Success

- The Tohono O'odham Nation Steps Program has conducted a Youth Diabetes Outreach Program annually for the past 4 years to reach out to the community's young people between 5 and 17 years of age. It provides diabetes education, awareness, and prevention activities and materials and highlights the importance of physical activity.
- The Indian Health Service's pediatricians have partnered with the Tohono O'odham Nation Steps Program to refer obese clients and those with diabetes or asthma for ongoing one-on-one health education. The program helps clients control their weight and teaches disease-specific self-management skills.
- The Tohono O'odham Nation Steps Program implemented the Open Airways for Schools program, developed by the American Lung Association, to teach self-management skills to elementary school children with asthma. The curriculum consists of six 40-minute lessons and is taught by trained volunteers. The interactive approach uses group discussions, stories, games, and role-playing to promote children's active involvement in the learning process.

Community Partnerships

Community partners help guide the development and implementation of Steps programs in the Tohono O'odham community. Collaborating organizations include the Prevention Coalition, the Food and Fitness Collaborative, and the Healthy Native Community Fellowship.

Contact

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