

# The Steps Program in Rockland County, New York

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

Rockland County has a population of about 294,600. By race, nearly 78% of residents are white, 11% are black or African American, and the remaining 11% are members of other races; by ethnicity, nearly 13% of county residents are Hispanic or Latino. The median household income is \$76,476; more than 10% of county residents live below the federal poverty level (2005 U.S. Census Bureau estimates). The Steps Program in Rockland County is working with food service establishments, parks, schools, businesses, and health care providers to reduce the burden of chronic diseases by implementing health and wellness policies, creating environments that support healthy lifestyles, and supporting practices that promote good health. Outreach plans focus on Rockland's culturally diverse community, especially school-aged children, the elderly, low-income neighborhoods, and the Rockland community at large.

## Spotlight on Success

- The Rockland County Steps Program, in partnership with local anti-tobacco initiatives and the county's park and recreation division, created a program called Young Lungs at Play to prevent children's exposure to secondhand smoke in outdoor play areas. A community survey conducted in May of 2006 showed that nearly 70% of residents support tobacco-free outdoor spaces where children play. As a result of adopting new policies, 453 signs designate 89 municipal areas, 31 public elementary and middle school grounds, 14 day care centers, 11 housing complexes, a church, and a day camp as tobacco-free zones.
- The Steps Program also launched an innovative school curriculum to promote physical activity as a way to encourage academic achievement and trained teachers on how to integrate it with daily classroom lessons. Read this success story in *The Steps Program in Action*, available at [www.cdc.gov/steps/success\\_stories/pdf/rockland.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/steps/success_stories/pdf/rockland.pdf).

## Community Partnerships

The Steps to a Healthier Rockland Collaborative, with its 200-plus members, is integral to the success of efforts in Rockland County to reduce the burden of chronic diseases. Meeting quarterly and implementing wellness initiatives throughout Rockland on an ongoing basis, the Steps Program strives to be "Everywhere in Your Neighborhood." The collaborative involves a wide array of community partnerships, including non-traditional public health partners such as restaurants, parks and recreation departments, and academic institutions.

## Contact

Steps to a HealthierNY–Rockland County  
Rockland County Department of Health  
Telephone: 845-364-2500  
[www.rocklandsteps.org](http://www.rocklandsteps.org)