

# The Steps Program in Hillsborough County, Florida

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 Florida's Hillsborough County is building healthier communities in 16 ZIP codes within the cities of Tampa and Temple Terrace by working with schools, health care providers, work sites, faith-based groups, and community leaders. Programmatic efforts are focused on adults and school-aged children in racial or ethnic minority and low-income populations. More than one-third of Hillsborough County residents are Hispanic or Latino (21%) or black or African American (16%). In 2005, 13% of residents in Hillsborough County lived below the federal poverty level. The value of intervention among young people is underscored by the fact that the Hillsborough County School District is the eighth largest in the United States, serving 185,000 students in 214 elementary, middle, and high schools.

## Spotlight on Success

- Through a community-based educational program for parents of asthmatic children and the general public, 1,100 school employees have received asthma education training, and operational practices at 10 schools have been modified to allow students to use peak flow meters (portable, hand-held devices that measure breathing levels) on school premises. In addition, the Hillsborough County School District established a district-wide policy that allows children with severe allergies or asthma to self-medicate during school hours (using an EpiPen<sup>®</sup> or inhaler). This policy covers more than 200 schools in the district. An additional 15 training sessions that were conducted for 136 child care and day care center directors resulted in a 28% gain in knowledge about asthma, its related illnesses, and exposures to environmental triggers. Read this success story in *The Steps Program in Action*, available at [www.cdc.gov/steps/success\\_stories/pdf/hillsborough.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/steps/success_stories/pdf/hillsborough.pdf).
- The Hillsborough County Steps Program, in conjunction with the School District of Hillsborough County, completed School Health Index assessments at 28 schools implementing the Coordinated School Health Program, and at another 45 schools planning to do so. District schools also established goals for improving physical activity programs, healthy food offerings, and tobacco-free lifestyle programs for both students and staff members.

## Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are integral to the success of the Steps Program in Hillsborough County. The partnerships are made up of both traditional and nontraditional partners, including health care providers, health plan administrators, faith-based organizations, chambers of commerce, government entities, cooperative extensions, businesses, museums, the school district, and institutions of higher learning. These diverse partners help guide the design and implementation of interventions in the Hillsborough County community.

## Contact

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