

The Steps Program in Boston, Massachusetts

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 Boston Steps Program is building healthier communities in eight contiguous city neighborhoods—Chinatown, Dorchester, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roxbury, South Boston, and South End. The 25-square-mile project area includes 58% of Boston's total population and 70% of the city's children and adolescents (under age 18). The project area's residents, of whom 20% are immigrants, are 37% non-Hispanic black or African American, 35% non-Hispanic white, 15% Hispanic or Latino, 7% Asian, and 6% other races or ethnicities. Programmatic efforts are focused on black or African-American and Hispanic or Latino populations, which bear the heaviest burden of chronic diseases in the intervention area.

Spotlight on Success

The Boston Steps Program is involved with schools by supporting a variety of activities such as Planet Health and the Eat Well Keep Moving curricula. These programs promote good nutrition and physical activity by providing professional development training to physical education teachers for improving curriculum frameworks. Planet Health is being taught in 16 middle schools, reaching more than 4,000 Boston students. In a year-end survey conducted after completing the pilot program, educators reported an increase in students' and staff members' knowledge of nutrition and physical activity, as well as an increase in awareness about the importance of staying healthy. More than 90% of teachers reported that the curriculum had a positive impact on both student health and their own health habits. Furthermore, the teachers reported that they looked forward to implementing the curriculum annually. Read this success story in *The Steps Program in Action*, available at www.cdc.gov/steps/success_stories/pdf/boston.pdf.

Community Partnerships

The Boston Steps partnerships involve stakeholders concerned with chronic disease prevention and control in Boston's neighborhoods. More than 100 organizations, along with individual residents, participate through attendance at quarterly partnership meetings or by joining a consortium team—Health Care Systems, Healthy Eating, School Health Council, Walkable Neighborhoods, and Workplace Wellness. Examples of key partners include Boston Public Schools, community health centers, Boston Main Streets organizations, grassroots neighborhood groups, faith-based organizations, community centers, hospitals, universities, tenant associations, pedestrian advocates, BlueCross BlueShield of Massachusetts, and City of Boston agencies.

Contact

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