

The Steps Program in Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan Counties, Washington

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

Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan Counties are rural areas in north-central Washington State; Chelan is the only county with a city large enough to be designated as a metropolitan area. One American Indian tribe is located in parts of Okanogan and Douglas Counties. The three counties together have approximately 140,000 residents, of whom 25% to 30% are Hispanic or American Indian, and 14% to 22% live below the federal poverty level; median household income ranges from \$32,052 to \$43,372 (2005 U.S. Census Bureau estimates). The target populations of this Steps Program's initiatives are racial and ethnic minority groups, people living below the federal poverty level, and the elderly.

Spotlight on Success

- The Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan Counties Steps Program partnered with the local Chamber of Commerce to establish the Healthiest Business Challenge, which brings together businesses in two counties for a contest focusing on healthy work-site activities. Employers and employees earn points for activities such as using the stairs, establishing a walking program, drinking water, eating fruits and vegetables, and implementing written policies on tobacco, healthy meeting foods, fitness, breastfeeding, and healthy vending machine use. Since 2005, 34 businesses and almost 6,750 employees completed the challenge. Read this success story in *The Steps Program in Action*, available at www.cdc.gov/steps/success_stories/pdf/washington.pdf.
- *Promotores* (Spanish-speaking community health promoters) trained by this Steps Program have provided health education and referrals to more than 1500 people each year throughout the community, including at farm worker migrant camps. Diabetes awareness media campaigns and surveys have reached both Spanish- and English-speaking populations across all three counties.
- This Steps Program helped conduct "safe routes" assessments in the two largest towns. These efforts influenced policy development and resulted in environmental changes that promote safe biking and walking. Twenty-one rural communities have started walking programs.

Community Partnerships

The Steps Program activities are guided by a coalition whose leadership team includes members from 13 organizations representing the health care, business, education, and community service sectors. Coalition members include the Chelan-Douglas Health District, Get Fit Foods, Gold's Gym, North Central Educational Service District, Washington State University Extension, Wenatchee Valley YMCA, Central Washington Hospital, Columbia Valley Community Health, Okanogan County Public Health, Wenatchee Valley Medical Center, Chelan-Douglas Together For Drug Free Youth, North Central Washington Rural Health Foundation, and Wenatchee Racquet & Athletic Club. In addition, many other community partners participate as appropriate on a broad spectrum of initiatives.

Contact

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