



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE BY ACTIVATING GRASSROOTS CHANGE

2009

Producing Results

Ensuring Physical Activity in Schools, After-School Settings, and Work Sites

- In **Clearwater, Florida**, key leaders on the YMCA of the USA's Pioneering Healthier Communities leadership team are leading by example. As part of the team's community action plan, the two largest providers of after-school programs in the area (R'Club Child Care, Inc. and the YMCA of the Suncoast) decided to provide all children in their 15 programs with 30 minutes of daily physical activity. As a result of their leadership, the county licensing board now requires that all such programs in Pinellas County (which includes Clearwater) provide children with at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week.

In addition, the leadership team provided information that helped support the passage of a state law requiring all elementary schools to provide 30 minutes of physical education 5 days a week. As a result of these changes, children across Pinellas County who participate in both school and after-school programs are now achieving the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

- **Tacoma-Pierce County, Washington**, through ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and Environmental Change), is focused on helping underserved communities in its efforts to increase access to opportunities for physical activity and improve nutrition for youth. The program is using change strategies, such as joint-use policies, which give the general public permission to use schools' exercise facilities during nonschool hours.
- **Stark County, Ohio**, through ACHIEVE, has assisted local employers with creating workplace policies that promote employee physical activity during work time, lunch, and breaks.

Getting Healthy Foods to Underserved Communities

- In **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, the YMCA of the USA's Pioneering Healthier Communities has given children and families with low incomes access to low-cost fruits and vegetables. Its leadership team partnered with Good Apples, the world's first full-scale online produce retailer, which sells high-quality fruits and vegetables for up to 40% less than supermarket prices. Five markets, which buy produce from Good Apples, have been established in YMCA after-school programs that serve under-resourced communities. As a result, 5,500 children from diverse backgrounds and more than 1,000 teenagers from families with low incomes have access to healthy foods each week.
- **Cleveland, Ohio**, has been working through Steps with the Community Gardening Program at Ohio State University Extension to create community gardens in intervention neighborhoods. The gardens have helped neighborhood residents increase their physical activity in addition to providing them access to fresh produce. The gardening program offers Starting a Community Garden workshops, meets with neighborhood block and street clubs, and partners with social service agencies to provide gardening tools and resources.

The program is also focusing outreach efforts on schools and City of Cleveland recreation centers to help plant new community gardens. Since the program began, approximately 50 gardens have been established, 1,400 new gardeners have participated in physical activity, and hundreds of families have received fresh produce. Thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables have also been donated to area food pantries. A new farmers' market was created in Cleveland's Central neighborhood where young people are employed to





sell the fresh produce that they grew in local gardens. More new gardens are being cultivated and serve as an example of positive change in the built environment.

Promoting Tobacco-Use Cessation for Children and Adults

- **Salamanca, New York**, through ACHIEVE, passed an ordinance that protects children and adults from exposure to secondhand smoke and encourages nonsmoking by banning smoking in all city parks and playgrounds.
- **Chautauqua County, New York**, through ACHIEVE, collaborated with the local tobacco control program and hospital staff members to introduce a new policy at the Women's Christian Association (WCA) Hospital, which requires health care providers to directly address patients' tobacco use and cessation efforts. As of May 2006, more than 547 health care providers were trained on the 2-minute intervention, and the WCA Hospital changed its patient intake and education forms to reflect the new process.

As a result of the new policy, calls from health care provider referrals to the New York State Smokers' Quitline quadrupled from 2005 to 2006. The Chautauqua County Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data show that the percentage of adults who smoked decreased from 2004–2005 (29%) to 2005–2006 (24%).

Reducing Emergency Room Visits Through Community-Based Diabetes Management

- The **River Region of Alabama**, through Steps, partnered with the Montgomery Area Community Wellness Coalition and Baptist Center for Diabetes to train diabetes wellness advocates in nutrition, physical activity, disease prevention and detection, diabetes management, and cultural competency.

Wellness Advocates are assigned to patients with diabetes to provide them with one-on-one assistance in setting health and wellness goals, self-management guidance, and vital

disease prevention education. Diabetes monitoring kits, lancets, and testing strips are donated to clients who are taught how to correctly use the supplies. Eighty percent of wellness care management clients were assigned to a health care team, which included a physician coordinating comprehensive primary care. As a result of this program, emergency room visits among participants decreased more than 50% during 2004–2007. Coordinated and systematic health care has been shown to decrease emergency room and inpatient visits and hospital costs.

Improving Community Health through Policy, Systems, and Environmental Changes

- **Southeast Alaska**, through Steps, brought together public health workers and community agencies representing diverse sectors of the seaside town of Sitka to plan a health summit. This spearheaded a new approach to health promotion in Sitka, which has a significant population of Native Alaskans. Four health goals were established at the inaugural 2006 Sitka Health Summit: (1) to create a bike- and pedestrian-friendly community, (2) to improve the nutritional environment in schools, (3) to develop an indoor community recreation center, and (4) to bring employers and insurance companies together to improve the health status of employees.

Following the summit, Sitka became the first community in Alaska to be designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists, developed and implemented a healthy vending machine policy for Sitka schools, created a community recreation center in an abandoned university gymnasium, and formed an Alaska Working Well coalition, which made employee wellness programs available to a large portion of the Sitka workforce. A second Sitka Health Summit, held in May 2008, resulted in the creation of a community garden, farmers' and fish markets, and plans for promoting and enhancing walking and biking to school in Sitka.