

Public Health: Making a Difference in Your Community

Chronic diseases—such as obesity and diabetes— account for 6 of the top 10 causes of death and disability in Florida. According to a study of national costs attributed to both overweight and obesity, medical expenses in Florida have reached as high as \$3.9 billion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

Although chronic diseases and their disabilities are among the most common and costly health problems, they are also among the most preventable. Charged with reducing death and disability due to obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases in Florida, the Florida Department of Health implemented the *Step Up, Florida! Healthy Communities Program*. Federal, state and local funds are disseminated through this program and used by all 67 county health departments to engage community resources and form partnerships to target and develop policy or environmental changes within community schools, worksites, healthcare agencies, and other organizations.

The policy and environmental strategies that are being implemented in Florida are building infrastructure in the communities to support healthy lifestyles. Policy interventions are changing laws or regulations to promote wellness, such as school policies regarding healthy food choices for lunch and vending machines, or work place policies that are implementing wellness programs providing blood pressure and cholesterol screenings. Environmental interventions are changing physical, social, or cultural conditions to facilitate behaviors that contribute to wellness. Examples in Florida include construction of safe and accessible sidewalks, bike trails, and parks, or making stairwells accessible and inviting. Policy and environmental change interventions often require a multi-year investment of time and resources and cannot be completed without community partners.

The following information highlights current activities that are being implemented across the state to promote physical activity and healthful nutrition.

- Alachua County: Alachua County Health Department is collaborating with community partners to implement and sustain a physical activity program, **Double Dutch Jump Rope Teams** at Alachua County Public Schools and Parks and Recreation facilities located in the Gainesville area. At the current time over 128 children are participating on teams and have reported an increase in their physical activity levels.

Contact: Dina Mosher, Alachua County Health Department
(352)334-8889
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdAlachua/cardio/>

- Bradford and Hendry Counties: **Fresh 2 You** program addressed the Healthy People 2010 objective to increase the intake of fruits and vegetables. The project targeted youth at various schools by offering more fresh fruits and vegetables at school lunches and recess. In addition, students were taught about dental hygiene and sanitation.

Contact: Raynell Fields, Bradford County Health Department
(904)964-7732
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdbradford/index.htm>

Mary Ruth Prouty, Hendry County Health Department
(863)674-4041 x 127
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdHendry/index.html>

- Broward County: Broward County Health Department and community partners are implementing a **Community Wellness Program** for the Haitian population. The goal of the program is to increase physical activity and decrease the incidence of heart disease in the Haitian community by providing education and health access linkages.

Contact: Kathleen Welch, Broward County Health Department
(954)762-3646
<http://browardchd.org/home.htm>

- Calhoun County: **Kick UP Calhoun** is a community based intervention designed to increase physical activity and decrease obesity in the community. The year long intervention consists of community teams which use interactive, web based programming to monitor their physical activity progress. Outcomes include an increase in residents' physical activity level and community partnerships.

Contact: Julie VanderMeer, Calhoun County Health Department
(850)674-5645 x235
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdCalhoun/index.html>

- Charlotte County: **Walks to the Moon!** is a community wellness project to increase physical activity and decrease the incidence of obesity of Charlotte County residents. Participants formed community teams logging over 240,000 miles and were able to utilize an interactive website on nutrition and physical activity levels.

Contact: Scot Hoverman, Charlotte County Health Department
(941)639-1181 x256
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdCharlotte/index.html>

- Hendry County: **HOPE El Faro** program battles obesity and a sedentary lifestyle in the Hispanic community, by promoting physical activity and nutrition. The Pastors of El Faro Church of LaBelle added a health component to their ministry outreach program. This program allowed Hendry County Health Department to provide health education in a faith-based setting that would normally have been conducted in a clinical setting. It has been well received by the congregation with reports of positive behavioral change.

Contact: Mary Ruth Prouty, Hendry County Health Department
(863)674-4041 x127
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdHendry/index.html>

- Holmes County: **Fit for Life** is an intervention implemented in the local middle and high schools promoting physical activity and healthy nutrition. In the form of a 12 week program, meal planning and preparation is taught to provide the nutrition basics for healthy living. This program's most noteworthy success lies in its sustainability. Preliminary results reflect an increase trend among participants of obtaining and maintaining a normal body mass index and blood glucose level.

Contact: Traci Corbin, Holmes County Health Department
(850)547-8500 x249
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdHolmes/index.html>

- Indian River County: Indian River County Health Department is developing a **smart growth** plan by partnering with local government, schools, faith-based organizations, private industries and healthcare facilities. Outcomes impacting the community include neighborhood livability and better access to community resources, as well as green space opportunities for physical activity.

Contact: Fatima Zayas, Indian River County Health Department
(772)794-7400 x2700
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdIndianRiver/index.htm>

- Manatee County: **Cooking with Kids** is an intervention to increase physical activity and decrease obesity in the community. Children are the target audience and a four week summer cooking program is the foundation for change. Outcomes thus far include an increase in literacy, math, and science skills with behavior changes in diet and physical activity.

Contact: Jody Lowry, Manatee County Health Department
(941)748-0747 x1347
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdManatee/index.htm>

- Pinellas County: **Big Fat Industries and Kidz Bite Back** is a public awareness campaign for parents and children that focus on marketing practices in the restaurant and food industries. The participants are educated on marketing practices and health science and taught behavioral techniques to increase their physical activity and healthy nutrition choices. Parents reported a positive change in their children's diet and activity level.

Contact: Lois Milne, Pinellas County Health Department
(727)824-6900 x11318
<http://www.pinellashealth.com/index.asp>

- Volusia County Health Department built a **walking trail** that is adjacent to its Daytona Beach facility. The trail is used by community residents and visitors in addition to offering health department clients and employees an opportunity to exercise in a safe and convenient location.

Contact: Barbara Harrison, Volusia County Health Department
(386)274-0670
<http://www.volusiahealth.com/default1.asp>