

Get Moving for a Healthier Spokane

Issue

Obesity is a growing trend throughout the nation, and Spokane County, Washington is no exception. About 21 percent of the adult population in Spokane County is obese and another 39 percent is overweight, meaning that 60 percent of adults may be at risk for a number of associated health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and joint problems. The Spokane Regional Health District decided to tackle the problem using their 2007 and 2008 Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funds. Working to change regional policies, the health district implemented several actions to help increase physical activity, one of the key ways to reduce obesity.

Intervention

Traditional prevention programs focus on trying to change personal behavior but, based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Spokane Health District knew that taking a policy and environmental approach and working with community partners could affect change on a larger scale.

Strategies included:

- **Developing a regional pedestrian plan**, identifying areas that are most walkable, and connecting residents with services and facilities
- **Producing “Spokane Area Physical Activity Guides”** with information on indoor and outdoor areas where residents can be active
- **Educating policy makers, planners, and advocates on active living** through a partnership with the Inland Empire American Planning Association, including a symposium attended by elected officials, decision makers, and educators focused on how to plan and build for the future while making health a central factor
- **Promoting and coordinating the Healthy Families, Active Kids Coalition**
- **Assessing walkability and bikeability needs in the county**

Impact

The health district is now seen as a leader in health policy and is looked to for valuable insight for planning and policy initiatives. In addition:

- Spokane City Council voted unanimously to provide funding for two years to hire a bike/pedestrian coordinator for the city
- Bike boulevards have been made a priority for the Spokane Master Plan, allowing bicyclists their own designated space on roads

These policy and environmental approaches supported by block grant funds promise to have a long term impact on increasing physical activity in the community and decreasing the rate of obese and overweight individuals.

County population*: 451,200

Spokane Regional Health District

Spokane, Washington

<http://www.srhd.org/>

