

Research Brief

Stepping Up Active Transportation in Community Health Improvement Plans

Overview

Active transportation, such as biking or walking to work, can build physical activity into the day and contribute to health. The Community Preventive Services Task Force provides evidence-based guidance on how land use and transportation plans, policies, and designs can promote active transportation. Local health departments can contribute by including active transportation in Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs). The Public Health Accreditation Board requires health departments seeking voluntary accreditation to participate in CHIP development. The purpose of this analysis was to determine which approaches to improving physical activity through active transportation have been included in CHIPs and understand local health department characteristics related to inclusion of these approaches.

Main Question

Which evidence-based strategies that promote active transportation are health departments and other stakeholders including in local health improvement plans?

Study

In collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control-funded Physical Activity Policy Research Network Plus, the study developed and conducted an online survey with local health departments. The survey was administered June – October 2017 with a random sample of 693 US local health departments. This report analyzed results of questions related to 8 strategies for increasing active transportation supported by research evidence. UMass Medical School Institutional Review Board approved this study. A total of 30.2% of the health departments contacted completed the survey. Among those analyzed, 45.6% reported including at least one of the 8 strategies in a CHIP. The top strategies were Safe Routes to School, healthy community design, transit access, and traffic safety and injury prevention.

The Bottom Line

Accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, use of credible information sources, and collaboration on a Community Health Assessment are important factors for inclusion of active transportation strategies in a CHIP.

Source

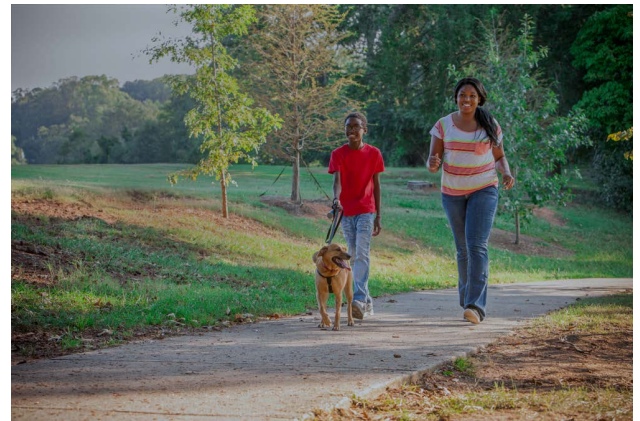
Sreedhara M, Goins KV, Frisard C, Rosal MC, Lemon SC. Stepping Up Active Transportation in Community Health Improvement Plans: Findings from a National Probability Survey of Local Health Departments. *J Phys Act Health*. 2019 Jul 30:1-8. doi: 10.1123/jpah.2018-0623.PMID: 31365900

Contact

Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD | Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine | University of Massachusetts Medical School.
E-mail: Stephenie.Lemon@umassmed.edu

Acknowledgement

Support was provided by the CDC (U48 DP005031-05) and Physical Activity Policy Research Network Plus (U48 DP005031-05S1), UMass CCTS (UL1TR001453) and NHLBI/NIH (F31HL142139). Findings are those of the authors and do not represent the official position of the funding institutions. Authors thank health department staff for participating.



Spotlight on Results

- 45.6% of health departments reported including at least 1 active transportation strategy in a CHIP.
- Common strategies were Safe Routes to School (22.3%), healthy community design (20.6%) transit access (19.5%) and traffic safety and injury prevention (19.2%).
- Health departments were more apt to include active transportation strategies if they were nationally accredited/pursuing accreditation, used credible information sources, or participated in a Community Health Assessment.

Call for Action

Developing a local CHIP is an opportunity for local health departments and other community stakeholders to promote strategies for active transportation. A place to start could be supporting walking to school with the Safe Routes to School strategy.