

South Carolina Calls on Youth to Join the All-Health Team

Issue

It has been stated that this is the first generation of youth that will not outlive their parents. According to 2005 South Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey, tobacco use is the single leading preventable cause of death in the nation and in South Carolina, killing more people annually than alcohol, car accidents, AIDS, murder, suicide, and illegal drugs combined. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 80 percent of tobacco users initiate use before they are 18. In South Carolina, more than 8,000 youth under age 18 become new daily smokers each year.

In South Carolina, childhood obesity and the risk of becoming obese is on the rise. Type 2 Diabetes, previously considered an adult disease, has increased drastically in overweight children. As a result the state's obesity-related medical costs topped \$1 billion in 2003. There is a low youth participation in healthy activities, practices, and outreach in our state. South Carolina youth and adolescents are experiencing serious health related issues that are preventive. These conditions often carryover into adulthood. Statistics show that over 61 percent of adults in our state are overweight or obese, and only 22 percent eat the recommended number of serving of fruits and vegetables each day.

Intervention

Thanks to the funds received from the PHHS Block Grant, DHEC was able to create the All-Health Team in 2003 to address these concerns. DHEC's All-Health Team developed a partnership with traditional and non-traditional partners to promote activities, which resulted in risk reduction behaviors such as: tobacco use prevention and control, physically active lifestyles, and/or health nutritional intake. The overall goal is to engage our youth in healthy behaviors at an early age thus increasing the likelihood of chances of healthy lifelong behaviors. Commercial spots are aired on WIS TV monthly highlighting the project, thus promoting healthy lifestyle messages to all of the citizens of South Carolina. Additionally press releases of the monthly winners are submitted, and the program is promoted through various other outreach methods.

Impact

The program has been unique in that it involves various sector of our state: public, private, media, medical, school and the community. It is an opportunity for the youth to be recognized and awarded for the positive health related projects they are doing, which impacts their lives and the lives of others in their communities.

During the program's inception in 2003, the following has been accomplished:

- Increased youth awareness of preventive health issues and practices through hands on learning.
- Received applications from 46 percent of the counties in the state.
- Selected seventeen projects, which involved over 10,119 youth and over 554 adults.
- Over 700 commercials shown to South Carolina citizens promoting healthy lifestyle messages.

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