

Indiana's Pedestrian and Bicycle Program Supports Local Physical Activity

Pete Fritz, AICP, RLA

At A Glance

The Indiana State Department of Health, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPA) conducted more than 40 Active Living Workshops to educate communities about creating pedestrian and bicycle plans. To do this, DNPA partnered with Health by Design, a statewide coalition that works to ensure Indiana communities have infrastructure for neighborhoods, public spaces, and transportation that promotes physical activity and healthy living. DNPA has provided 13 communities with \$20,000 grants to support carrying out these strategies.



Public Health Challenge

According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System in 2014, approximately 33% of the adults living in Indiana had obesity and less than 50% of adult Indiana residents met moderate physical activity recommendations. The Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey noted that nationally 48% of children walked or biked to school in 1969. However, in 2009, the National Center for Safe Routes to School found

that number to be only 13%. Physical activity can lower the risk of early death, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. Physical activity can also help manage many chronic diseases, yet many communities across the country struggle with educating residents and putting environmental changes into action to support physical activity such as biking or walking.

Find Out More

For more information about the Indiana Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, visit <http://www.in.gov/indot/2828.htm>. More information about DNPA can be found at <http://www.in.gov/isdh/20060.htm>. This project is supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

The Active Living Workshop was one of the most important events that the Adams County Winning with Wellness Coalition has ever done for the improvement of our community.

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Approach

To support the Indiana Pedestrian and Bicycle Program, DNPA worked with partners to conduct more than 40 workshops on a variety of topics that include how to create pedestrian and bicycle plans. More than 2,500 participants—including city planners, engineers, public health professionals, school administrators, and community leaders—attended these workshops. The workshop participants also agreed to a year-long process of follow-up activities. These activities include to draft an action plan, provide status reports, and create success stories outlining each group's greatest achievements. DNPA also provided \$20,000 each to 13 communities to prepare bicycle and pedestrian master plans.

Results

DNPA provided a total of \$260,000 in grant funding to 13 communities. In addition, more than \$160,000 of local funding was budgeted by communities to carry out the recommendations of the Active Living workshops. The bicycle and pedestrian planning activities reached more than 400,000 Indiana residents. The workshops allowed a first-time opportunity for many participants to discuss physical activity access issues. For example, although a health department officer previously met with school personnel about nutrition issues, this was their first opportunity to meet regarding safe routes to school. During the workshop, each group identified short-term action steps and long-term planning ideas. Even without DNPA funding, many communities were able to make changes by creating pedestrian and bike plans using local funds.

What's Next

Moving forward, DNPA will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshops and use this information to improve the support provided to communities to put changes into action. DNPA will also address health equity in future workshops by targeting low income communities for the Active Living workshops. DNPA will examine the development of tools and additional trainings to increase community capacity to carry out workshop recommendations. To further the reach of the workshops across Indiana, the Indiana Agricultural Extension Service has adopted the same Active Living Workshops model and will deliver Active Living workshops in communities served by their community wellness coordinators.