

PATTON – FULLER COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Built Environment and Physical Activity Program

Program Goal: Reduce the risk of premature mortality and the development of numerous chronic diseases

Program Purpose: Enhance the capacity of communities to be involved in decision-making processes and to extend their role in issues pertinent to their community

Program Audience: Community members from all areas

Program Background: Physical activity is the leading health indicator in Healthy People 2010 as a method to prevent health threats. Scientific studies have provided strong evidence that regular physical activity at different levels reduces the risk of premature mortality and the development of numerous chronic diseases, improves psychological well-being, and helps prevent weight gain and obesity by keeping caloric intake in balance with energy expenditure (Transportation Research Board [TRB], 2005). Despite this evidence, many Americans have not adopted federal guidelines on appropriate levels of daily physical activity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2003). Recent studies have determined an increase in regular physical activity of 8.6% (from 43.0% to 46.7%) among women overall and 3.5% (from 48.0% to 49.7%) among men. Despite certain gains, racial and ethnic disparities in physical activity remained evident (CDC, 2007).

More than half a century ago, more automated technological innovations and fewer physically active occupations, more labor-saving devices in homes, and the increased use of automobiles for personal travel reduced the physical activity requirements of daily living. In addition, relocation from heavily populated metropolitan areas to low-density, widely dispersed suburban locations has increased travel distances to many destinations, making private vehicles the most practical and convenient mode of transportation. To aggravate the problem, lifestyle and cultural changes such as increased television watching and other sedentary activities have also played a role in reducing physical activity. For this reason, the built environment has recently come under scrutiny as an important potential contributor to reduced levels of physical activity (TRB, 2005).

The emphasis of this program is on a community design project that enhances the capacity of communities to be involved in decision-making processes and to extend their role in issues pertinent to their community. Community members will be invited and encouraged to participate in all phases of the projects. Working with community members to facilitate the project will help ensure that the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program utilize culturally sensitive approaches for the target population (HCPHES, 2008).

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2007). Prevalence of regular physical activity among adults – United States, 2001–2005. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 56(46), 1209–1212.

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Transportation Research Board. (2005) *Does the built environment influence physical activity?: Examining the evidence*. Retrieved from <http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/sr/sr282.pdf>

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