

# South Carolina



## Promoting Physical Activity Through Environmental and Policy Supports

### Public Health Problem

Almost three fourths of U.S. adults are not active enough; in fact, almost a third of U.S. adults are inactive, despite recommendations for 30 minutes of physical activity at least 5 days a week. Not getting enough physical activity puts people at risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers. Many community environments discourage physical activity because they do not have sidewalks for walking, facilities for bicycling, or places to safely play outdoors.

### Program Example

The Prevention Research Center at the University of South Carolina is striving to help Sumter County adults get the recommended amount of physical activity. County residents were encouraged to form a community coalition, which now receives technical assistance, training, and other resources from the Prevention Research Center. Residents are learning how to make policy and environmental changes that support physical activity. The center guided the community coalition in setting goals and objectives, which led to activities such as walking programs and National Trails Day events. The community's heightened awareness and advocacy led to more sidewalk projects, bike lanes, share-the-road projects, and local trails. It also spurred the launch of worksite walking and Adopt-a-Park programs as well as the printing and distribution of 24,000 maps identifying walking routes in the area. In addition, a worksite wellness policy was established by one of the county's largest employers. The researchers helped the community with the initial assessment, through surveys and focus groups.

### Implications and Impact

The University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center is expanding knowledge about how to organize and encourage coalitions. The center also is helping county residents gain support from local parks and recreation departments as well as recognition by other community and governmental organizations. The researchers have prepared reports and made presentations to community leaders and shared information at state and national meetings of physical activity professionals. The center will prepare additional reports to educate government officials and will publish scientific papers describing the process of this community's participation in the project.