POLICY BRIEF

Policies supporting urban physical activity promotion: lessons from Bogota, Colombia and Curitiba, Brazil

By Amy A Eyler, Ph.D., Washington University in St. Louis

Citation: Diaz del Castillo A, Sarmiento OL, Reis RS, Brownson RC. Translating evidence to policy: Urban interventions and physical activity promotion in Bogota, Colombia and Curitiba, Brazil. *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, X:XX.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Sustainability of programs such as Ciclovía and CuritibActiva are largely influenced by policies. Formal policies help maintain structure of programs over time.
2. Political support is necessary for success and sustainability. Programs should align with priorities of political leaders and local governments.
3. Transdisciplinary sector support is influential in both development and sustainability of these programs.
4. The interaction of community and government, and the promotion of this interaction are necessary for sustainability.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Practice-based interventions should not be overlooked. Even though few studies have been done on the effects and outcomes of initiatives like these, replication can be of benefit to communities.
2. More research is needed not only on outcomes, but on the process of development implementation, and integration of policies and initiatives to improve community physical activity.

How can changes in urbanization policies promote physical activity?

There is evidence of an association between built environment elements with walking and cycling. Attributes such as safe access to places to be physically active and connectivity among destinations can influence the amount of time people spend in physical activity for leisure or travel. Policies in large cities like Bogota and Curitiba have been made to support built environments conducive to increasing physical activity.

What policies were used to improve community physical activity in Curitiba?

As a result of Curitiba being noted as a city with high cardiovascular disease rates, several municipal agencies joined to make a healthier city and worked to form what is now *CuritibActiva*. This program began with individual-level physical activity promotion but grew to include policy changes that supported physical activity classes in a variety of settings. To address inequality and improve health, the mayor introduced “Collective Citizen Efforts” that consists of health and nutrition education, screening and other free public services. A dedicated staff and transdisciplinary involvement helps strengthen this program. Sectors working with this initiative include

- urban planning
- transportation
- environment
- physical education

Urban and transportation planning policies at the local level were especially influential. Park development and the implementation of public transportation policies laid the foundation for many of the changes. Environmental policies regulating the development of conservation areas helped secure use for these places for recreation.

What policies were used to improve community physical activity in Bogota?

Ciclovías began in 1974 in Bogota as a way to improve bicycle use on city streets. As a response to improve inequality of public space, the program gained political support. Changes in mayors, improved infrastructure, and change in program authority enhanced the Ciclovías over time. Policies supporting improved route and connectivity strengthened the program. Additionally, transdisciplinary sector involvement made Ciclovías an integral part of city administration. Sectors include

- sports and recreation
- urban planning
- transportation
- health
- culture

These sectors have examples of national and local policies that support this initiative. National Plan for Recreation (1986) and the National Constitution (1991) supported recreation and sports as the right of all citizens to local policies that institutionalize urban planning and restructured transportation planning.

BOTTOM LINE:

As demonstrated by Ciclovía and CuritibActiva, urban community initiatives to increase physical activity influenced by multisector policies hold promise as effective, sustainable programs.