

## INTRODUCTION

Did you walk or bike to school when you were a child? Thirty years ago, more than 66 percent of all children walked to school. Walking or biking to school gives children a sense of freedom and responsibility, allows them to enjoy the fresh air, and provides opportunities to get to know their neighborhood while arriving to school alert, refreshed, and ready to start their day. Yet, most American children are denied this experience; in fact, only 13 percent of American children walk or bike to school.

Recent research indicates that 20 to 25 percent of morning traffic is due to parents driving their children to school. As a result, traffic congestion has increased around schools, prompting even more parents to drive their children to school thinking they are keeping their children safe. However, the health consequences to our children and to the well-being of the community are extensive.

A successful *Walk (or Bike) to School* program integrates health, fitness, traffic relief, environmental awareness, and safety. It is an opportunity to work closely with your school, your community, and your local government to create a healthy lifestyle for children and a safer, cleaner environment for everyone.

## THE TOOL KIT

This tool kit has been designed to assist you in initiating and implementing a *Walk (or Bike) to School* program. Many successful programs began with just one or two volunteers organizing a *Walk (or Bike) to School Day*. Other programs were created through community task forces organized by public officials to address traffic issues. There is no “right” way to get started – the important thing is just to start!

Your chance of creating a successful program will increase by customizing it to meet the needs of your community, and by following in the footsteps of other successful programs in the United States that have incorporated one or more of the following four approaches:

- The **ENCOURAGEMENT APPROACH** uses events and contests to entice students to try walking and biking.
- The **EDUCATION APPROACH** teaches students important safety skills and launches driver safety campaigns.
- The **ENGINEERING APPROACH** focuses on creating physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding the school, reducing speeds, and establishing safer crosswalks and pathways.

- The **ENFORCEMENT APPROACH** uses local law enforcement to ensure drivers obey traffic laws.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Materials in this tool kit have been adapted from the following publications:

- ❖ *Promoting Active Living Communities* by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- ❖ *Safe Routes to School* by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- ❖ *Kids Walk to School* by the Centers for Disease Control.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Since many of you may be organizing a *Walk to School Day* for the first time, here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

### ❖ **WHAT IS WALK TO SCHOOL COLORADO?**

*Walk to School Colorado* is a vision that communities create pedestrian and bicycle friendly neighborhoods where it is safe for all children to walk or bicycle to school.

Do you remember walking or bicycling to school? Wouldn't it be great if all children in Colorado could have those same happy memories? Well, they can. All you have to do is organize a *Walk (or Bike) to School Day*, a *Colorado Walking Wednesday* program, or a *Walk to School* program in your neighborhood.

The idea is simple; parents, teachers, and neighbors walk to school with their children on *Walk to School Day*. It is fun and energizing, the simple joy of walking to school, plus you get the day off to a healthy start and renew your community spirit with friends and family.

For most communities though, one day isn't enough. What they really want is for children to be able to walk to school every day, which can lead to permanent changes like better sidewalks, safer street crossings, and improved driver and pedestrian behavior. So take the leap to launch a *Walk to School Day*, you can't imagine what you might be starting!

### ❖ **WHY WALK TO SCHOOL?**

- Kids need to move! Children need a variety of physical activities each day, and walking or bicycling to school is an ideal way to get moving.
- Active kids get better grades and have fewer discipline problems.

- Children learn how to be safe in traffic as pedestrians and bicyclists.
- We breathe cleaner air due to fewer trips by car, resulting in less air pollution.
- There is less traffic in neighborhoods and near schools.
- It increases community spirit.
- It's FUN!

❖ **WHAT IS THE DATE OF THE 2003 WALK TO SCHOOL DAY?**

The 2003 *Walk to School Day* is Wednesday, October 8, 2003.

❖ **WHAT IS THE DATE OF THE 2004 EVENT?**

The 2004 *Walk to School Day* is scheduled for Wednesday, October 6, 2004.

❖ **HOW DO I ORGANIZE AN EVENT?**

It's easy! Start by reading the "Steps to Planning a *Walk to School Day*" in the "Walk to School Day" section of this tool kit, and register online at [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org).

❖ **WHY SHOULD I REGISTER MY EVENT?**

By registering online at [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org), you are letting the world know that your community is walking! In addition, your email address is automatically added to the *Walk to School Day* mailing list so that you can receive email updates and other useful information about the upcoming national and international events.

❖ **HOW CAN I CONTACT OTHER EVENT COORDINATORS IN MY AREA?**

The official *Walk to School* web site ([www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)) maintains a comprehensive list (by state and city) of the registered events in your area. Log on to access the contact information for other *Walk to School Day* coordinators in Colorado.

❖ **WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?**

Involve members of the community who are interested in creating a safe environment for walking and bicycling. The following people are typically involved in *Walk to School Day*: kids, parents, grandparents, care-givers, teachers, principals, superintendents, mayors, city council members, local police departments, local fire departments, local celebrities, community organizations, and more!

**❖ WHAT IF IT'S TOO FAR TO WALK?**

Many families and communities are located in rural areas, but that doesn't stop them from walking! Have parents and children meet at designated staging areas about a mile from school - from the staging area, they can walk as a group to the school. Or, hold your walk during lunchtime at the school track. The idea is to get walking! Improvise and customize your walk to fit your community.

**❖ HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?**

Many organizers don't spend a cent on *Walk to School Day*. It doesn't cost anything to walk to school – it just requires some planning. If you would like to provide snacks or prizes, talk to local businesses and ask them if they'll sponsor your event by donating cash, prizes, juice, and/or snacks.

**❖ WHEN SHOULD I START PLANNING MY EVENT?**

It's never too early to start planning your event. You can plan it months ahead or even days ahead (depending on the size of your event). The earlier you start planning, the more time you'll have to promote and publicize the event.

**❖ HOW DO I GET PARENTS AND OTHER SCHOOLS TO PARTICIPATE?**

Spread the word! Make sure everyone knows when *Walk to School Day* is as well as any additional information about the walk such as time, place, route, etc. Promote your event well in advance by sending home letters or flyers to parents, informing them about *Walk to School Day*. You can copy the *Walk to School Day* brochure in this tool kit or develop your own using the official *Walk to School Colorado* logos (also in this kit). Make sure kids know about *Walk to School Day* by making announcements on the school intercom or by reviewing pedestrian safety tips and the health benefits of walking, in class, prior to *Walk to School Day*.

**❖ WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES SHOULD I PLAN FOR THAT DAY?**

Many organizers plan a morning of activities which are “kicked-off” by the walk itself. This could include a breakfast gathering at the school, an assembly about pedestrian safety or healthy behaviors, or a special presentation given by the local police or fire chief. The possibilities are endless.

**❖ DO YOU HAVE ANY MATERIALS FOR WALK TO SCHOOL DAY ORGANIZERS?**

You may copy any of the resources included in this tool kit or download materials from [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org).

**❖ WHAT ARE THE *WALKABILITY AND BIKEABILITY CHECKLISTS*?**

The checklists provide a simple set of questions that adults and children can use to examine their neighborhoods and measure how friendly their streets are for walkers and bicyclists.

**❖ HOW DO I GET THE LOCAL NEWS MEDIA INVOLVED?**

The media can help spread the word about *Walk to School Day*. Call your local media (television, radio, and newspaper) to invite them to your event. Use the materials in the “Media” section of this tool kit to help develop your communication plan.

**❖ HOW CAN I INCORPORATE WALKING TO SCHOOL IN MY COMMUNITY'S EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES?**

Many communities have adopted the *Walking School Bus* as a way for kids to walk to school every day. Other communities celebrate walking by keeping walking logs or by instituting a *Colorado Walking Wednesday* program. The Colorado State Legislature has declared every Wednesday throughout the year as *Colorado Walking Wednesday*.

**❖ WHAT IS A *WALKING SCHOOL BUS*?**

In a *Walking School Bus*, a designated adult supervisor “picks up” each student, house by house, on foot. The supervisor and group of students walk to school along a set route, enjoying fresh air, physical activity, and friendly conversation. To learn more about the *Walking School Bus* log on to [www.walkingschoolbus.org](http://www.walkingschoolbus.org).

**❖ WHAT IS A BIKE TRAIN?**

A bike train is the same concept as the *Walking School Bus*. Adult supervisors “pick up” students at their homes and they bicycle to school rather than walk.

**❖ HOW DO I GET STARTED?**

Register your school on the *Walk to School* web site ([www.walktoschool-usa.org](http://www.walktoschool-usa.org)) and host *Walk to School Day* at your school in October or begin a *Walk to School* program on any date that works for your school.

**❖ FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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