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Indiana Pedestrian Safety

During the last year, both the pediatric and adult trauma centers have seen an increase in the number of pedestrian injuries. The pediatric trauma center began seeing an average of two children per week for pedestrian injuries, the majority occurring within the city of Indianapolis. A small group of concerned neighborhood leaders, health care professionals, educators, law enforcement officers, and city planners began to meet to discuss the issues. Prior to applying for the grant, a small observational pilot study of pedestrian crossing behaviors was conducted in which we found that only 36% of children walking to and from school utilized crosswalks. Other high-risk pedestrian behaviors observed included: walking against the light; walking on the road rather than the sidewalk; failing to scan for traffic before crossing the road; and walking out between parked cars. As was prevalent in the literature, we found that “knowledge based” education related to pedestrian safety was not the primary issue. Children “knew” how to safely cross the street; it was the behavior, however, that was risky.

We know that decreasing pedestrian injuries is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach and includes environmental/engineering changes, law enforcement, motorist behavioral changes, as well as changes in child and adult pedestrian behaviors. Thus, we are focusing on skills based behavior changes with the children and caregivers while also bringing together community members to focus on enforcement issues and environmental/engineering change” states Dr. Dawn Daniels, the project team leader. The taskforce is using the grant as a catalyst for incorporating pedestrian safety into the culture and design of the community.