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# River Region Receives \$2.7 Million To Drive Down Chronic Diseases

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By Catalina Trivino  
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Montgomery's wellness coalition now has more money to improve to improve healthcare in the region. The coalition received a multimillion dollar federal grant from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department.

River Region health department officials say chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes and heart disease are becoming more prevalent in the area, but they hope a more than \$2.7 million grant will make treating those a little bit easier.

The Wellness Coalition hopes the grant will help in the fight against chronic diseases to promote healthier living and help control healthcare spending in the river region. The 3-year grant will be shared between Montgomery, Lowndes and Macon Counties.

"We're going to train people in the churches and community agencies how to help other people prevent and manage chronic disease," Said Cynthia Bisbee, Executive Director of the Wellness Coalition.

But that's not all the money will be used for.

The Wellness Coalition is partnering with the Central Alabama Regional Planning Commission and the River Region Obesity Task Force to bring its "Corner Store Initiative," putting more fresh produce in strategic locations for people who have difficulty getting to a local store. There will also be more walking routes to promote physical activity.

"Identify safe walking routes in the city and or county where there are sidewalks and whatnot and work with that local municipality to develop some signage to mark the route," Said Sara Byard with CARPDC.

Wellness Coalition officials and partners say they have needed this for a long time. They're just one of about 49 health agencies in the nation to get the grant.

About \$2.7 trillion is spent a year in the nation on medical care. 80% of that goes to treatment of chronic diseases.