



Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department

Web: health.hamiltontn.org

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

August 11th, 2025

The Health Department's Step ONE Program is Now Accepting Teaching Garden Grant Applications through September 19th.

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – The Hamilton County Health Department's Step ONE Program is now accepting applications for its Teaching Garden Grant through September 19th, 2025. This initiative empowers organizations to address childhood nutrition by creating interactive garden spaces that inspire healthier food choices among youth and their families. These gardens offer more than fresh produce; they provide opportunities for hands-on learning where participants cultivate practical skills like teamwork, responsibility, and food literacy. By connecting gardening activities with core subjects such as math, science, and language arts, the Teaching Gardens turn everyday lessons into real-world experiences that promote lifelong healthy habits.

The Teaching Garden Grant application is now available on our website at Health.HamiltonTN.org.

- **Who:** Schools, churches, preschools, libraries, community centers, & local organizations may apply.
- **When:** Applications will close on September 19th, 2025 at midnight.
- **Where:** Teaching Gardens must be located in Hamilton County.
- **Grants:** Up to ten \$1,000 applicants will be selected.

Step ONE selects up to 10 applicants from Hamilton County to receive \$1,000 grants. Organizations or community groups interested in establishing a Teaching Garden in their community are encouraged to apply. The goal of the Teaching Garden Program is to raise awareness about the connection between nutrition quality and health for children and their families. These gardens are spread throughout Hamilton County, and all applicants with a vision for enhancing nutrition and gardening education will be considered.

"The beauty of the Teaching Garden Program lies in its ability to bring people together, whether they belong to a neighborhood group, a faith-based organization, or a childcare center. These gardens create a space where families can learn, grow, and connect through the essential need for healthy food. This grassroots initiative works to build healthier communities from the ground up, according to Christopher Marinello, a Public Health Representative for the Step ONE program. Teaching Gardens are not limited to classrooms; they can flourish in parks, community centers, and even small urban lots. Each garden becomes a hub for teaching practical life skills and fostering a sense of community pride. The program aims to equip people of all ages with the tools to make better food choices and the knowledge to maintain those habits."

Since its launch in 2008, Step ONE has funded 97 teaching gardens at various locations, including schools, churches, preschools, libraries, and community centers. Additionally, it has supported many gardens in neighborhoods that are considered food deserts or face food insecurity. While the primary focus of the Step ONE garden program is education, these gardens in underserved communities often raise awareness about access to food and the issues related to food insecurity.

Additional resources

- For more information, call 423-209-8247 or email CMarinello@Hamiltontn.gov
- To read this information in Spanish, visit the Health Department's Spanish Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SaludHamiltonTN>