



# Miami-Dade County, Fla.

## PROFILE:

POPULATION: 2,591,035  
MEDIAN INCOME: \$41,400  
MEDIAN HOME VALUE: \$181,500  
% W/ BACHELOR'S DEGREE: 17.5%  
WALK SCORE: 74/100

## STATISTICS:

→ Since 2002, there has been a 53 percent reduction in the overall number of children hit by cars in Miami-Dade County and a 70 percent reduction in the number of children hit by cars being seen at the county's Level-I trauma centers.  
([University of Miami](#))

→ WalkSafe educated approximately 118,000 students and 4,520 teachers in pedestrian safety at 180 schools during the 2007–2008 school year.  
([Safe Routes to School Partnership](#))

## QUOTES:

*"Students, especially of elementary age, need 60 minutes of physical activity every day. They get 30 minutes from physical education, but the 15 minutes they can spend walking to and from school increases their cardiovascular efficiency and maintains a healthy weight."*

—DR. JAYNE GREENBERG, [Miami-Dade County Public Schools director of physical education and health literacy](#)

*"If we start young, this program is based for kids that are elementary school age, starting in kindergarten. If we can get those basic understandings of how to walk safely to school and increase their daily activity, I think that's what it's all about."*



## Kids Learn Street Smarts

Florida is home to four of the top 10 most dangerous U.S. cities for walking, as identified by the Transportation for America report, *Dangerous by Design*. These rankings take into account the number of pedestrian fatalities in contrast to the number of pedestrians, and Florida's largest communities have some of the worst fatality rates in the nation. In Miami, the number of pedestrian injuries is disproportionate to the number of pedestrians—20 percent of all traffic fatalities are pedestrians—and in the early 2000s, the number of child pedestrians caught the attention of the local medical community.

Necessity is the mother of invention. In 2001, Dr. Gillian Hotz, now director of the KiDz Neuroscience Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, as well as her colleagues, recognized a pattern of pediatric pedestrian injuries and fatalities in Miami-Dade County. In response, they developed [WalkSafe](#), a program that teaches children basic pedestrian safety skills and helps schools advocate for infrastructure improvements where necessary. Currently reaching 150,000 students a year, the program has documented a 53 percent reduction in the overall number of children hit by cars in Miami-Dade County and a 70 percent reduction in the number of children hit by cars being seen at the county's Level-I trauma centers.

The [core of the program](#) is a three-day, 30-minute-per-day curriculum that teaches pedestrian safety to young learners. WalkSafe staff train teachers at each school, who then implement the program curriculum with their students. On the first day, students watch an age-appropriate National Highway Traffic Safety Administration video about pedestrian safety. On the second day, Physical education teachers lead the students in safety exercises. The program culminates on the third day, when students create posters illustrating their new knowledge of pedestrian safety. In addition to this core curriculum, the WalkSafe model includes partnerships with local planning bodies to improve walkability around schools, engagement with parents to promote traffic enforcement and the monitoring of program outcomes.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
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The success of WalkSafe was made possible through a three-year Transportation Enhancements grant of only \$350,000, procured in 2007. In addition to implementing the program in new schools, this grant covered technical assistance for the schools, helped produce an evaluation of the program and has assisted in expansion of the WalkSafe model statewide. Local schools are also able to benefit from federal funding from [Safe Routes to School](#) grants; Miami-Dade County has received more than \$2 million for infrastructure improvements that make walking to school safer.

The key to WalkSafe's success is twofold. First, WalkSafe founders prioritized monitoring the program's progress and invited outside analysts to measure the impact, accumulating objective evidence that [WalkSafe makes a real difference](#). Second, WalkSafe staff built relationships with the community, including reaching out to the Miami-Dade school board and building the awareness and political momentum necessary to introduce the [WalkSafe curriculum](#) to all county public school students. Since 2003, WalkSafe has been mandated by the school board in every public Miami-Dade County elementary school.

What began in February 2002 as a pilot project in four schools is now a valuable community program. WalkSafe fills the gap between the need and will to do something about child pedestrian safety, and the capacity and knowledge to make something happen. In addition to making a tremendous difference in Miami-Dade, the program was designed to be scalable. The WalkSafe model is now used in 12 other counties in Florida, and the curriculum is shared with states throughout the US.