

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY CHANGE CHURCH POLICIES TO BATTLE HEALTH DISPARITIES IN OMAHA

Summary

Black churches are answering the call to action to address racial and ethnic health disparities by establishing environmental policies. As a result of this start with Creighton University's CDC REACH Project under the leadership of Dr. Sade Kosoko-Lasaki and Dr. John Stone, the Omaha faith-based community will be able to sustain their efforts long after grant funding has ceased.

Pictured right: Dr. Cedric Perkins, Pastor, Pilgrim Baptist Church; Pastor Aloy Okechukwu, Redeemed Christian Church; Dr. Ralph Lassiter, Pastor, Mount Moriah Baptist Church, and Rev. Kenneth Allen, Pastor, Zion Baptist Church

Challenge

Blacks are likely to die from heart disease far more than whites. The Douglas County Health Department reported that the heart disease age-adjusted death rate was 48% higher for Blacks living in Omaha than whites for the period 2006-2010. How can a grass roots community organization address health disparities in their city?



Solution



Work Congregation by Congregation the churches are able to do their part in addressing health disparities while promoting physical activity, according to Mrs. Doris Lassiter, contracted Faith-based coordinator for the Creighton University, Center for Promoting Health and Health Equality Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (CPHHE-REACH) project in Omaha, Nebraska. *"It takes strategic partnerships with grassroots communities to address health disparities, and churches are excellent resources for consistently implementing activities associated with effective health and wellness policies,"* said Mrs. Lassiter.

Success Stories

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/dchsuccesstories/>

Results

During the first year of the pilot project, 4 churches were recruited, impacting over 1,200 members. The faith-based goal in the 3 year pilot project is to recruit 12 churches and impact over 5000 congregational members over 3 years by utilizing new church written policies. The goal is to bring greater awareness regarding physical exercise when combined with healthy eating as a way to reduce health disparities associated with cardiovascular disease to not only the congregation... but also utilizing the congregation to share these efforts throughout the black community.

Sustainable Success

Common written policies adopted by the churches include:

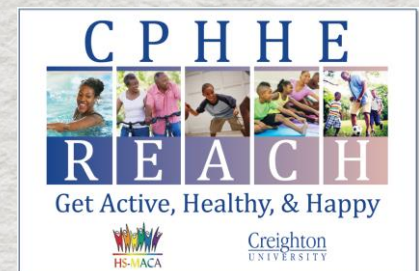
1. Developing and sustaining a formal Health Ministry led by trained faith-based community health workers/health ambassadors whose mission is to design, implement an annual plan to address health and wellness.
2. Developing partnerships with community organizations that support their goal of a healthy congregation and a healthy community;
3. participating in surveys regarding the health and wellness condition and practices within their congregation;
4. Incorporating healthy messages into church communications such as weekly bulletins, newsletter, website, videos and outdoor signage;
5. Promoting on-site church physical activity for congregational members of all ages and residents of Senior Housing centers managed by the churches. In addition to providing on-site exercise classes, one church agreed to change its church transportation policy and use its church van to transport congregational members as well as residents from surrounding communities to off-site exercise classes.
6. Making structural changes, including providing friendly stairwells and encouraging their use;
7. Holding Promotion of Walking meetings - prayer walks;
8. Installing bike racks at churches to promote biking;
9. Making healthy food choices available during church events and meetings;
10. Providing prompts, signage associated with physical activity and healthy eating;
11. Increasing the congregations' awareness of chronic disease, its impact, prevention and treatment utilizing speakers, health screenings, printed material and electronic presentations; and;
12. Entering into joint-use agreements with community health centers/schools/YMCA to promote exercise.



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