



**Michigan Department of Community Health  
Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program  
Faith-Based Nutrition and Physical Activity Project**

**1) Public Health Problem –**

In 2009, Michigan had the 10<sup>th</sup> highest prevalence of obesity in the United States.

- Three out of every 10 adults in Michigan were obese (30.3%), while approximately 36% were overweight.
- African Americans had a significantly higher prevalence of obesity compared to Whites (41.6% vs. 28.7%).
- African American students in the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades had a higher obesity rate (18.0%) compared with White students of the same age (10.0%).
- 77.8% of Michigan adults did not consume adequate fruits and vegetables, while 80.4% of African American adults in Michigan had inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption.
- 48.6% of Michigan adults reported inadequate physical activity, while 54.6% of African American adults in Michigan reported inadequate physical activity.

**2) Program –**

The Faith-Based Nutrition and Physical Activity Project is a collaborative effort between Michigan's Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program (NPAO) and the Institute for Black Family Development. The Institute is a 501(c)(3) that works to equip, network, and provide resources to pastors, community leaders, volunteers, and staff members from churches and Christian organizations. Since 1988, the Institute's networking relationships have touched over one million people, provided training for 5,000 people and witnessed the creation of 35 churches, Christian organizations and programs.

In 2009, Michigan's NPAO Program formed a partnership with the Institute to implement healthy eating and physical activity strategies targeting African American communities in the City of Detroit. Through this partnership, 40 African American churches in three cities, Detroit, Southfield and Grand Rapids, are participating in this project. The goal of the project is to achieve health equity in physical activity and healthy eating in the African American population.

The churches involved are committed to improving the health of members of their congregation and the surrounding community members. All participating churches commit to implementing impactful healthy eating and physical activity strategies. Each church identifies leaders who provide oversight for the step-by-step process including program implementation. This process includes trainings, technical assistance and readily available resources to help each church meet its health goals. Initially, each church completes the web-based Promoting Healthy Congregations Assessment ([CLICK HERE](#)), which enables faith-based organizations to assess themselves on how well they are supporting healthy lifestyles among their congregants; identify steps they can take to promote better health among church members; and define actions that will make a difference within their communities of faith. After receiving the results of the Promoting Healthy Congregations Assessment, each church creates an action plan that highlights the steps they wish to take to address the health and wellness needs of their

congregation. This action plan helps churches prioritize changes and track progress over time. The churches then use these action plans to implement nutrition and physical activity policy and environmental change interventions within their organization.

Churches may use several types of strategies to improve the health culture of their faith community. These have included policy and environmental changes and behavioral change strategies. In the past, churches have made policy changes to church food guidelines regarding the types of food served, limiting soda and juice, and increasing access to water at church functions. Churches also have implemented social support programs, such as walking clubs, fitness classes, and walk-a-thons to get their congregations moving. Environmental changes were also adopted by several churches. For example, one Detroit-area church adopted an abandoned park in a low-income community. With the help of church members, improvements were made to the park to enhance safety and aesthetic appeal. The church also began working with the neighborhood block club to support on-going park maintenance and established an “evening walk in the park” program. The adoption of the park not only benefited church members, but enhanced the surrounding community as well. Another exciting environmental change strategy debuting this year is the creation of fruit and vegetable mini-markets at each church to increase access and availability of fresh produce for congregation and community members.

### 3) Impact –

- During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, 24 churches implemented environmental, policy and behavioral change strategies to support healthy eating and physical activity, impacting 3500 people.
- The project has expanded to include 40 churches during the 2010-2011 year with anticipation of impacting 5,800 individuals
- Planning is currently underway to expand the project to 60 churches during the 2011-2012 fiscal year.
- It is the goal of 2012-2013 fiscal year to incorporate all 80 churches affiliated with the Institute into the Faith-Based Nutrition and Physical Activity Project. These 80 churches represent all eight major African American Christian denominations.
- The program not only continues to serve Detroit churches, but has expanded to include churches in Southfield and Grand Rapids.
- The program goals and objectives continue to grow, for example, expansion of the project to include fruit and vegetable mini-markets which will increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables to church and surrounding community members.

For more information about the Faith-Based Nutrition and Physical Activity Project, please contact:

Beth Ames, Nutrition Coordinator

[Amese1@michigan.gov](mailto:Amese1@michigan.gov)

517-373-8602