



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

**1) Public Health Problem –**

- Michigan is tied for the 6<sup>th</sup> most obese state, with an adult obesity rate of 31.7% (BRFSS, 2010).
- Three out of every 10 adults in Michigan are obese (31.7%), while 35.1% are overweight (BRFSS 2010).
- African Americans have a significantly higher prevalence of obesity compared to Whites (45.3% vs. 29.8%) (BRFSS, 2010).
- African American students in the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades have a higher obesity rate (18.0%) compared with White students of the same age (10.0%) (YRBS, 2009).
- The obesity rate within the City of Detroit is 32% higher than the U.S. median obesity rate (BRFSS, 2010)
- The *adequate physical activity rate* within the City of Detroit is 21% lower than the U.S. median rate (BRFSS, 2009).

**2) Program –**

The Faith-Based Nutrition and Physical Activity Project is a collaborative effort between Michigan's Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program (MiNPAO) 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 the Faith-Based Nutrition and Physical Activity Program with the goal of increasing access and availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and physical activity in partnership with African American Churches in Detroit.

The churches involved are committed to improving the health of their congregation and 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. This process also includes trainings and technical assistance 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 use several types of strategies to improve the health culture of their faith community. The current project has several key elements. Each church involved creates and maintains a fruit and vegetable mini-market to increase access and availability of fresh produce to congregation members and surrounding community members. The mini-markets are generally held on Sundays, after church services. Churches also implement a physical activity project, most commonly in the form of social-support programs, like walking club. Some churches have also chosen to establish regular exercise classes as well as sport leagues. Participating churches also adopt church-wide health policies. These can include healthy food and beverage policies and/or physical activity policies. Churches involved have also increased health and wellness messaging through a variety of mediums. Finally, participating churches may elect to take part in optional programming, such as nutrition education classes and urban gardening opportunities.

### 3) Impact –

- During the 2010-2011 fiscal year, 31 churches implemented the Faith-Based Nutrition and Physical Activity Program, which served 2,680 people
- 1,700 people purchased fresh produce from over 20 mini-market opportunities per week
- 980 people participated in physical activity programs
- 96% of churches felt they were successful at reaching their target populations
- 80% of churches stated the project benefited community members
- 60% of churches were able to leverage additional resources, such as monetary donations, sponsorship, exercise equipment donations, and food donations
- Nearly 50% of churches partnered with other churches and local organizations
  - Of churches that formed partnerships, 100% were able to leverage additional resources, which is key for project sustainability

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

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