Stroke Smart Michigan: Program Overview and Steps Required to Become a Faith-Based Organization Stroke Champion

Stroke Smart Michigan is a statewide initiative led by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Michigan Stroke Program (MiSP). The program works with organizations across Michigan to increase stroke awareness, improve rapid response to stroke symptoms and reduce stroke-related illness and death. Faith-based organizations (FBOs), as trusted community hubs, play a key role in bringing lifesaving knowledge to the people they serve.

Why This Work Matters

Stroke is a leading cause of disability and death in Michigan. After decades of decline, stroke mortality has risen since 2013 and continues to exceed the national rate. Many communities experience high burden of stroke risk factors and need accessible, culturally relevant education and resources. Leaders in faith communities hold trusted roles and help shape the well-being of their members. Faith-based organizations are uniquely positioned to help reverse these trends through outreach, education and support.

Program Goals

Stroke Smart Michigan aims to:

- Increase public awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke.
- Improve readiness to recognize and respond quickly.
- Promote prevention and cardiovascular health.
- Reduce disparities through focused outreach.
- Build sustainable partnerships for better community health.

Faith-Based Organization Participation Criteria

To become a Stroke Smart Faith-Based Organization, participants will:

- Appoint a Stroke Champion to serve as the primary program contact.
- Complete Stroke Preparedness Training through MDHHS.
- Coordinate at least one annual stroke screening event, offering education, risk assessment and connections to community resources.
- Distribute approved educational materials on stroke prevention and preparedness.
- Host or connect members to a stroke support group with help from MDHHS, local stroke prevention groups or local hospitals.
- Steps to complete this criteria can be found on Page 3.

Benefits of Participation

Faith-based organizations that meet Stroke Smart criteria:

- Equip congregations with life-saving stroke literacy.
- Strengthen community readiness and reduce delays in seeking emergency care.
- Connect individuals to prevention and recovery resources.
- Demonstrate leadership and commitment to community health.

Recognition reflects a commitment to awareness and education, not clinical certification.

Building a Healthier Michigan Together

Through strong partnerships with county health departments, local organizations, and community leaders, Stroke Smart Michigan expands effective, evidence-based approaches statewide. By engaging faith communities, the program helps ensure that every Michigan resident, regardless of where they live, work, learn, or worship, has the knowledge to Spot a Stroke, Stop a Stroke and Save a Life.

Steps to Become a Recognized Stroke Smart Faith-Based Organization

1. Designate a Stroke Champion responsible for overseeing the program, including coordination with MDHHS and stroke prevention groups to host stroke education events.
2. Complete the Stroke Smart Michigan Partner Interest Form (URL: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/StrokeSmartInterestForm) to initiate the recognition process.
3. Ensure the Stroke Champion completes the MDHHS BE-FAST Stroke Preparedness training. The Michigan Stroke Program team will work with your organization's Stroke Champion to identify a date and time to complete the training.
4. Display posters/other materials in main areas of the facility. Stroke Smart materials are available on the Stroke Smart Michigan Resources page.
5. Coordinate with MDHHS, local hospitals or stroke prevention groups to host at least one stroke support group annually for the community or connect individuals with established stroke support groups within the community.
6. Coordinate with MDHHS and local stroke prevention groups to host at least one stroke awareness event annually at the faith-based organization.* The event should:
    - Educate participants on how to identify a stroke and the importance of early Emergency Medical Services activation.
    - Assess individual stroke risks and provide guidance on reducing risks.
    - Screen for social determinants of health and connect participants with appropriate community-based resources.
    - Distribute approved stroke awareness materials to participants.

Once steps 1-6 are finished, submit the Stroke Smart Michigan Partner Completion Form (URL: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/StrokeSmartCompletionForm). This will allow MDHHS to verify the completion of the criteria and to recognize your organization as Stroke Smart.

***Note:** Various public health and nursing organizations partner with Stroke Smart Michigan to provide free onsite stroke screenings. Hosting these events will require that the Stroke Champion from the organization assists in coordinating the site location and event date and time with MDHHS Stroke Team Staff.

For more information on the Stroke Smart Michigan Program or for assistance visit Stroke Smart Michigan (URL: www.michigan.gov/StrokeSmart) or contact MDHHS-Stroke@Michigan.gov.