

CONGREGATIONS 'TAKE ON' DIABETES

New York coalition helps churches attack growing problem of obesity

Public Health Problem

- The mostly African American and Latino neighborhoods of the southwest Bronx are among the state's highest in rate of diabetes risk, cases of diabetes and deaths from diabetes.
- Each year almost half of people with diabetes in the Bronx will be hospitalized.
- The Medicaid program spends over 5 billion dollars on the care of people with diabetes in New York State annually
- Studies prove that promoting healthy eating, physical activity and needed weight loss in people at risk of diabetes can prevent the disease and reduce costly complications.

Program

- Using Public Health & Health Services Block grant funding, the New York State Department of Health, Diabetes Prevention and Control Program supports The Bronx Health REACH Coalition for Diabetes Prevention.
- The Coalition developed and implemented a faith- based health and fitness program called "Fine, Fit and Fabulous," which empowers participants to reduce diabetes risk by increasing physical activity, making healthier food choices and using the positive reinforcement of prayer and scriptural references.
- Members of the congregation are trained as facilitators, enhancing program ownership and sustainability. Sixty parishioners have completed the program.

Impact

- Program graduates lost weight and increased regular physical activity.
- Two churches reported an increase in fruit, vegetable and other healthy food offerings at church-related events, extending benefits beyond individual participants.
- The experience of one church member highlights the success of this effort:
Jeanne, an African American in her thirties, was obese, with high blood pressure and a family history of diabetes. Her extra weight damaged her knees and she used a cane. Her pastor encouraged her to join the "Fine, Fit and Fabulous" program where she learned simple exercises, and healthful eating habits. She lost 119lbs, her blood pressure is normal and she no longer suffers knee pain. She has maintained this weight loss for over six months with her motto "plan, pray and prepare."

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