

Working with African American Churches to Improve Health



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6th Biennial Childhood Obesity Conference
June 2011, San Diego, CA



It takes a Village

Parents

Media

Government/Policy

Health Care System

Community Organizations

Schools

Private Industry

The Problem of Childhood Obesity



- Parents want healthy kids
- Under-resourced families experience greater hardships → obesity

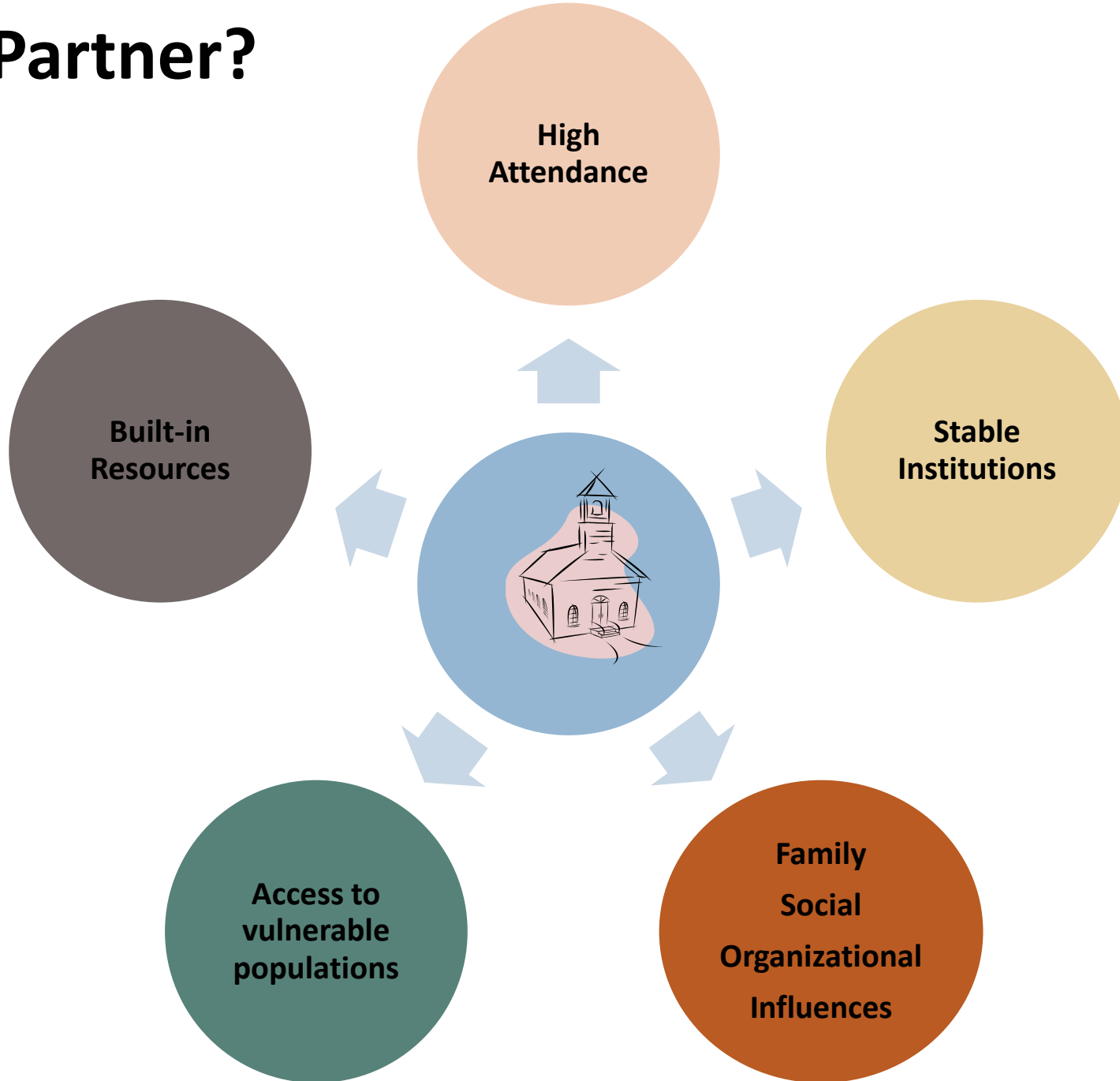


- Physicians and health care providers want healthy kids
- Clinical care models not sufficient to address obesity issues



- Faith-based organizations want healthy members
- Sphere of influence for obesity related behaviors

Why Partner?



Working with Faith-Based Organizations



1. Church as recruitment site

2. Church as program delivery site

3. Members part of the program delivery

4. Members included + spiritual and religious components

Hardships

- Lack of consistent care
- Insurance Costs
- Medical Mistrust, fear of unequal treatment
- Patient/doctor communication
- Time constraints
- Low health literacy

Resources/Needs

- Health Ministries
- Youth Programs
- Nutrition programs
- Potlucks
- Gardening/exercise programs
- Health fairs/seminars
- Counseling



Church-based Prevention Programs

Project Name	Intervention Components	Behaviors
Black Churches United for Better Health	Lay health advisors, Tailored print, Environmental changes, organizational	Fruit and Vegetable intake
Wellness for African American through Churches (WATCH)	Lay health advisors, Tailored print and video	Fruit and vegetable intake Physical Activity Colon cancer screening
WATCH II	Lay health advisors, Tailored print and video	Fruit and vegetable intake Physical Activity Colon & prostate cancer
e-WATCH	Lay health advisors, Tailored print and video via web	Fruit and vegetable intake Physical Activity Colon and prostate cancer
Body & Soul	Pastoral support, Policy change, Educational activities, Peer support	Fruit and vegetable intake
ACTS of Wellness	Tailored newsletters, decision aid, peer support	Colon cancer screening, Physical activity

**How to build
partnerships
with faith-
based
organizations
in your
community.**



Challenges & Lessons Learned

(Campbell, Allicock, Resnicow et al., 2007, Annu Rev Public Health)



- Careful attention to the partnership and developing trust
- Everything on the table approach
- Effort to understand social/cultural context through formative research
- Plans for sustainability

Gaining Entry (1)

- **Recruitment Methods**
 - Cold calls
 - Snow-ball recruitment
 - Known networks
 - Media
- **Don't judge a church by its size**
- **Who's in charge?**
 - Positional vs. personal power
 - Identify key contact for planning



Gaining Entry (2)



- **Getting to know your church partner**
 - **Formative Research**
 - **Face time:** food & fellowship, church member buy-in, interpersonal connection
 - **Program Planning:** Include both advocates and adversaries
- **Reality Check**
 - Personal beliefs in conflict/barrier to partnership?
 - Importance of being genuine

Gaining Entry (3)



- **Getting to know your church partner**
 - **Formative Research**
 - **Face time:** food & fellowship, church member buy-in, interpersonal connection
 - **Program Planning:** Include both advocates and adversaries

Gaining Entry (4)



- **Getting to know your church partner**
 - **Formative Research**
 - **Face time:** food & fellowship, church member buy-in, interpersonal connection
 - **Program Planning:** Include both advocates and adversaries
- **Reality Check**
 - Personal beliefs in conflict/barrier to partnership?
 - Importance of being genuine

Working with Faith-Based Organizations

- **Training/Meeting Activities**
 - Setting the right tone
- **Transparency**
 - Research/Program Design
 - Funding



Working with Faith-based Organizations

- **Time frame**
 - Health program/funding timeline vs. church calendar
- **Materials Development**
 - Spiritual and cultural appropriateness
 - Language, health literacy



Efforts to understand the social/cultural context

- **Importance of church liaison/insider**

Sources:

- ✓ Pastors
- ✓ Members
- ✓ Key group leaders (e.g. Elder, “Mother” of the church, church board etc.)
- ✓ Community Advisory Board



Plans for Sustainability



- Begins at start up, on-going process
- Church's track record for making permanent changes
- Present church situation/structure/staffing
- Resources needed to sustain program

Hope Circles

- Innovative program combining economic and asset building with obesity intervention.
- HOPE (**H**ealth, **O**pportunities, **P**artnerships, and **E**mpowerment) Works is an innovative evidence based lifestyle change and weight management program that was designed primarily for women now adapted to include men
- African American churches



Acknowledgements

- **Research Collaborators**
 - Marci Campbell, PhD, RD
 - Carol Carr, MA
 - Ken Resnicow, PhD

- **Churches**

References

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