

Partnerships between Local Health Departments and Faith-Based Organizations

A Tip Sheet on Working Together

Local health departments and faith-based organizations partner together around many public health concerns. In 2016, NACCHO interviewed both groups in an effort to understand how to leverage the capacity of these partnerships to improve the health of the community.

- ❖ **LEVERAGE STRENGTHS!** Once local health departments and faith-based organizations begin working together, they find a number of uncommon strengths are available through the partnership.
 - Local health departments have experience engaging a community and tend to bring a culture of openness.
 - Faith-based organizations offer wisdom about the community.
 - Local health departments have capacity to assist with small grant applications and reporting, making collaborations more financially viable for faith-based organizations.
 - Some faith-based organizations are involved in social justice concerns which support local health department efforts around the social determinants of health.
 - Local health departments need community members to serve in community health assessment and improvement planning efforts; members of faith-based organizations can represent their communities well.

- ❖ **REMEMBER!** Thinking about what the other organization is up against is key to effective partnering, for example:
 - Local health departments sometimes have complex organizational structures, multiple locations, complicated jurisdictional boundaries, and staff turnover.
 - Faith-based organizations sometimes have sensitivity to public health topic areas, an inability to work quickly or change positions, and a lessened interest when it appears that they are being used to support an agency's agenda rather than the needs and priorities of their communities.

- ❖ **WHAT GOES WELL**
 - Shared purpose or goal.
 - Considering costs up front.
 - Asking congregations and individuals to commit to healthy living.
 - Evening and weekend sessions, offering other languages, being cognizant or willing to learn about the needs of different groups.
 - Focusing on the tasks that are mutually beneficial to both organizations.
 - Understanding what is happening locally and politically.

❖ **OPPORTUNITY!** Local health departments and faith-based organizations partner around many health-related concerns, including:

- Adverse childhood experiences
- Blood pressure screenings
- Case management services
- Chronic disease self-management
- Community planning
- Diabetes prevention
- Emergency preparedness
- End-of life conversations
- Epidemics and pandemics
- Health fairs
- Health messaging
- HIV/AIDS testing
- Infectious disease spread
- Medications drop-off
- Mental Health First Aid classes
- Needle drop-off
- Neighborhood farmer's markets
- Opioid efforts
- Parenting classes
- Reducing stigma for mental health treatment
- Social justice
- Substance abuse
- Vaccinations and flu shots
- Vulnerable populations
- Voter's registration
- Water-lead testing
- Workshops connecting faith and health

❖ **INTERESTED?** In many communities, partnerships between may begin around a single topic of concern to the faith community and the local health department, as both see the strategic importance of working together.

❖ **COVID-19 RESPONSE** To find out more about LHD-FBO partnerships around the coronavirus, contact preparedness@naccho.org



Support health departments



Advocate on behalf of local public health



Optimize strategic alliances and partnerships



Encourage NACCHO member engagement