



Dissemination and Implementation of the Faith, Activity, and Nutrition Program in South Carolina Churches

The University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center (USC PRC) is partnering with Fairfield Behavioral Health Services, a county-wide council, and a large religious denomination to study the dissemination and implementation of a faith-based program in South Carolina churches. The Faith, Activity, and Nutrition (FAN) program, which is listed in NCI's Research Tested Intervention Programs, targets environmental, systems, and policy change within churches to create a church environment supportive of physical activity and healthy eating.

Physical inactivity contributes to four of the five leading causes of death, and along with poor diet, is estimated to be the second leading *preventable* cause of death in the United States and a major public health problem globally. Churches are natural partners to promote physical activity and healthy eating, as they are vital organizations within nearly every community. Churches reach large numbers



of people typically underrepresented in health promotion efforts, including rural, racial minority, and low income residents. By using lay health advisors to deliver the program, FAN utilizes a low-cost model that can be adapted across communities. The program can also be tailored to the interests, culture, and values of the church.

Currently, in Phase 1 of FAN, we are working with 56 churches in Fairfield County, South Carolina, a medically underserved and rural county. The lay health advisors trained 36 churches in late 2015 and will train an additional 20 churches in late 2016. Pastors and church health coordinators expressed confidence in implementing FAN after completing the full day training. They have proposed diverse strategies to integrate physical activity and healthy eating into their



church policies and practices. Examples include hosting walking contests, sharing pedometers with the entire congregation, serving fruits and vegetables at all events with food, and tying health messages to scripture.

In Phase 2, the USC PRC will work with the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church (comprised of ~1,000 churches) to disseminate FAN statewide. This phase will allow us to study larger-scale dissemination and further explore the vital role churches play in implementing and disseminating an evidence-based program more broadly.

*“Churches are developing a more proactive mindset in addressing holistic health-- the spiritual as well as the physical. We have to provide members practical application through **what we say and by what we do** and give them the encouragement to eat better, exercise more, and challenge themselves.”*



Reverend Ricky E. Gibson, Pastor of Brown Chapel Baptist Church, and FAN Pastor Health Advisor, Jenkinsville, SC

Contact Information:

Deborah Kinnard, Program Manager
University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center
921 Assembly Street, PHRC 1st floor ● Columbia, SC 29208
(803) 777-6292 ● Kinnardd@mailbox.sc.edu
<http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/>



“Coming from this county, I knew you chose the right place with all of the health issues I see and the growth of fast food places. FAN opens a door of opportunity for better health. Many uninsured and unemployed here use the hospital like a doctor’s office. They don’t have a regular doctor. FAN provides information that any church member can pick up and use and get out to the community. Having FAN in churches gives people support and encouragement in a nonthreatening way. With improved health, members will be better able to serve, do more outreach, and be more active in sharing the good news.”

*Ms. Josephine (Joey) Beckham,
FAN Coordinator
Bethel United Methodist Church,*





*Be a **FAN** for your health*

Increase your faith, be more physically active, and eat more fruits and vegetables.



May you “prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers”
III John 1:2 (New King James Version)



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