

University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center scales up their Faith, Activity, and Nutrition (FAN) Program by taking it online



What is FAN? FAN is a no-cost, faith-based program (originally delivered in-person) to help church committees create organizational practices and policies to make church environments more supportive of physical activity and healthy eating. FAN guides churches through an assessment and planning process to learn how to provide opportunities, set policies, share messages, and support pastors with encouraging their congregation to become more active and healthier. Churches also receive 12 months of resources and technical assistance to implement the program. We invite you to learn more on the [FAN website](#) and on the [National Cancer Institute's Evidence-Based Cancer Control Programs](#).

ONLINE DELIVERY ALLOWS GREATER REACH AND FLEXIBILITY

The University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center (USC PRC), along with university and faith partners, created the [Faith, Activity, and Nutrition \(FAN\) program](#) using a community-based participatory approach. By changing their policies and practices, FAN helps churches prevent and address the most common health conditions in their congregation by increasing physical activity and healthy eating in members.

FAN has been effective in changing organizational practices, according to three evaluations conducted by USC PRC and faith leaders.



USC PRC received requests for training from churches throughout the Southeast and, later, from across the nation. However, PRC staff did not have the resources or budget to support the growing demand for in-person trainings. In 2019, with the support of its Community Advisory Board and partners, the work began to allow for online delivery of the program.

Following public health best practices, USC PRC turned to the literature to learn how to package and transition the intervention to an online platform. Unfortunately, they did not find much relevant research that was practical, uncovering a knowledge gap that needed to be filled.



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Online FAN participants were impressed with the program and provided encouraging feedback:

“It is the complete package. Nothing was lacking or missing.”

“It is a very worthwhile program that I wholeheartedly support. These modules make it easy and fun, while being in-depth and attainable.”

“Thank you for this life changing program.”

USC PRC HELPED CHURCHES AND ADDRESSED THE LITERATURE GAP AT THE SAME TIME

USC PRC regularly gathered input from partners and priority audiences to ensure the program was converted to an online format effectively. The online version of FAN consists of two brief introductory videos, eight self-paced modules, a discussion board, and one year of technical assistance and resources. Participants can receive technical assistance by contacting the PRC or utilizing the discussion board.

In 2020, USC PRC pilot-tested the online version with nine churches. Results were encouraging and aligned with previous evaluations of the in-person training. The majority of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- I am confident that I have the skills to put the physical activity part of the FAN program in place in my church.
- I am confident that I have the skills to put the healthy eating part of the FAN program in place in my church.
- I am confident that I can work with the pastor and other church leaders to put the FAN program in place in my church.

Based on these results, USC PRC published its process so others can learn how to convert in-person interventions to an online format. Publications include:

- [A process for converting an in-person training to increase church capacity to implement physical activity and healthy eating practices and policies to an online format.](#)
- [Developing criteria for research translation decision-making in community settings: a systematic review and thematic analysis informed by the Knowledge to Action Framework and community input.](#)

TAKING THE NEXT STEP WITH A NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

USC PRC is moving forward with national implementation of its online program. This process began with recruiting churches through trusted partnerships and led to enrolling 107 churches, representing 18 denominations in 22 states. In addition, the PRC is exploring partnerships with non-academic organizations to scale up the program.



WHY DEVELOP FAN?

- Eating smart and being active help reduce the risk of chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and some cancers, as well as prevent weight gain and promote weight loss.
- Heart disease and cancer are the leading causes of death for non-Hispanic Black or African American adults.
- Black or African American adults have the highest death rate of any racial or ethnic group for most major cancers, including breast, cervical, and colon cancer.
- Regular church attendance is high among African American adults. Health messages delivered in a church setting have the potential to resonate with members.
- Few evidence-based interventions for churches, especially those that target organizational change, are available for scale-up and broad reach.



TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PRC PROGRAM AND OUR ONGOING PROJECTS

Visit our website at www.cdc.gov/prc and explore the [PRC Project Database](#) for details on past and current projects.