



Escambia County Faith-based Initiative

Program Proposal

Communications, Health Education, and Nutrition
Florida Department of Health in Escambia County

Overview

Purpose

The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (FDOH-Escambia) seeks to work with local faith-based organizations and churches to promote and protect the health of Escambia County residents. DOH-Escambia recognizes the power of the social networks within faith-based organizations and the opportunity to create community partnerships to improve public health among all sectors of the population. By understanding what health-based information, education, and services are currently being offered in the faith-based community, FDOH-Escambia will work with local leaders to fill in the gaps. The purpose of the faith-based initiative is to establish and maintain a communication network between FDOH-Escambia and local faith-based and civic organizations to provide health education and information. The goal and objectives of this initiative include:

Mission: Mobilize partnerships with faith-based organizations in Escambia County to inform and educate people about health issues in the community

Goals:

- Identify the current health promotion activities, health education, and support services provided by faith-based organizations
- Provide public health information based on identified interest or issues
- Link people to needed personal health services

In addition to the specific goals, FDOH-Escambia aims to engage faith-based leaders to research innovative approaches and solutions to health problems in the community, promote partnerships between public and private agencies to meet local needs, and encourage the faith-based community to implement wellness programs.

The Role of Faith-based Organizations

Type of Community

Escambia County, Florida, houses many types of faith-based organizations that vary in size, income, demographic, and theological orientation. However, many congregations participate in community activities outside of worship services and receive support from much larger, regional and national denominations and networks. They play a large supporting role in the civic infrastructure of Escambia County, and provide a large amount of support for several facilities, organizations, and services that work to improve the quality of life of Escambia County residents. Faith-based ministries often provide day care, counseling, and other support services to members of their congregations to create a healthy community; therefore, making it a prime area for improvement in health-based education and services.

Faith-based Organization Assessments

Overview

Evaluation of the services provided by each faith-based or civic organization, namely churches, will provide a synopsis of the current status of health promotion and education activities within each organization and types of media used to communicate with members. The assessment will also collect information on capacity for improvement in health communication, education, and outreach within each organization. FDOH-Escambia will be able to identify gaps in health promotion and education by organization, geographic location, and race/ethnicity.

Conducting Assessments

Local faith-based organizations will be contacted to better understand their services offered to their community and to improve the mutualistic relationship with FDOH-Escambia.

Assessment surveys will be carried out by a Health Educator within the Communications, Health Education, and Nutrition Division beginning in March 2016. Health Educator(s) will make contact with a representative from each organization by phone and or email presenting them with a letter stating the goal and purpose of the faith-based Initiative. The health educator(s) will attempt to schedule a meeting with a representative of each organization to complete the assessment in person to grasp a better understanding of each faith-based organization's wants, needs, and capabilities.

Implementation

Organizations will be asked to enter into an information exchange network for the purpose of facilitating the delivery of routine health messages as well as information in public health emergencies.

Data from the surveys will inform the type of information shared and methods used to communicate with faith-based organizations. Requested information and presentations by each faith-based organization will be accommodated as permissible.

This model of health information exchange can be expanded to enhance communication and public health messaging with other community groups such as businesses or childcare centers.