Faithful Families Thriving Communities (Faithful Families)

Overview

Faithful Families Thriving Communities (Faithful Families) is a direct education and PSE change intervention that builds on the connection between health and faith at multiple levels of the socioecological model—through individuals, interpersonal relationships, organizational policies and practices and environment, and the broader community. Over the course of the program, Faithful Families engages each faith community in direct peer education, policy and environmental supports, and community engagement. Faithful Families can be used with any religious tradition. Trained lay leaders from individual faith communities are paired with nutrition/physical activity educators to co-teach lessons and deliver the program. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, Food Insecurity/Food Assistance **Intervention Type:** Direct Education, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

Faithful Families has worked predominantly with low-income African American faith communities, designated by percentage of their members who are eligible for Medicaid, eligible for free or reduced school lunches and/or are at 200% of the federal poverty level. The program has also demonstrated success in non-African American faith communities. This focus allows faith communities to link members with education and resources, empowering them to eat healthier, increase their physical activity and become advocates for positive policy and environmental changes within their communities. **Setting:** Faith-based community **Target Audience:** Parents/Mothers/Fathers, Adults, Older Adults **Race/Ethnicity:** All

Intervention Components
The main components of Faithful Families include the following:

- Recruiting and training a nutrition/PA educator (facilitator)
- Recruiting faith communities
- Recruiting and training lay leaders from each faith community to be involved in the program
- Recruiting faith community members to participate in nutrition/PA sessions
- Administering environmental and policy assessments
- Committing to environmental and policy change (the faith community should commit to at least one environmental change (e.g., posting a map of the parking lot or available trails that details distance) and one policy change (e.g., requiring that fruit be a dessert option) during the first program year
- Implementing the Faithful Families curriculum and using the Faithful Families Planning Guide (where applicable).

## Intervention Materials

Faithful Families has a nine-lesson *Eating Smart and Moving More* curriculum, which facilitators and lay leaders use while teaching the nutrition, food safety and food resource management lessons. The topics for the lessons are as follows:

- Plan: Know What’s for Dinner
- Shop: Get the Best for Less
- Shop for Value, Check the Facts
- Fix it Fast, Eat at Home
- Choosing More Fruits and Vegetables
- Fix it Safe
- Making Smart Drink Choices
- Choosing to Move More Throughout the Day
- Making the Connection

Faithful Families also has a four-session Chronic Disease curriculum. These are delivered after *Eating Smart and Moving More lessons*. These lessons follow the same format and contain strategies for reducing risk of four prevalent chronic conditions. Faithful Families includes a full planning guide that makes adoption of PSE changes by others both feasible and straightforward. It contains draft policy and environmental change templates that a faith community can present to its members for adoption and sample documents to publicize once the changes are implemented. The Planning Guide also includes information on how to establish a health committee within a faith community. Additionally, Faithful Families has developed stand-alone components to support groups and individuals as they adopt healthy behaviors, including a Walking challenge, Fruits and Vegetables challenge, Breastfeeding guide, and guides to family-based classes, grocery store and farmers’ market tours. These additional materials are available for free on the website. The curriculum and guide are available at [FaithfulFamilies.com](http://FaithfulFamilies.com). While the guide and some additional materials are free, there is a cost associated with the curriculum and training.

## Intervention Costs

To become a National Implementing Partner, please complete and submit an application form on the website. Faithful Families staff will review your application and follow-up about attending the Faithful Families in-person training, for implementing partners, purchasing curriculum materials, and providing technical assistance. Organizations must first complete the...
Evidence Summary

According to 2017-2018 program data, 48 faith communities in North Carolina implemented the program. Trained facilitators and faith-based lay leaders implemented the nine-lesson curriculum and PSE changes to promote healthy eating and physical activity. Self-reported entry and exit forms (based on EFNEP’s national reporting forms) were used to measure changes in participants’ dietary practices and physical activity. These were analyzed using paired sample t-tests. Quarterly reports developed by the NC Division of Public Health were used to track PSEs. Participants (n=251) were significantly more likely to use “Nutrition Facts” to make food choices (p = .001); plan meals ahead of time (p = .012); shop with grocery list (p = .022); and prepare food without adding salt (p = .022). A total 39 of 48 (81%) faith communities implemented at least one PSE change. Seventeen of 39 faith-based organizations (FBOs) (44%) selected PSE changes related to nutrition policies or the nutrition environment. Of these, 7 faith communities implemented policies to serve water or unsweetened beverages and healthy food options during events; 4 promoted nutrition standards through posted information (i.e., posters, flyers); 4 introduced nutrition-related topics during services; and 2 expanded existing community gardens to donate produce to local food non-profit organizations, potentially impacting over 2,200 faith community members. Sixteen of 39 faith communities (41%) selected at least one Faith Community Assessment (FCA) priority question related to physical activity. Of these, 9 faith communities mapped walking trails around facilities for community use; 7 installed benches along walking trails and promoted trails through signage and wayfinding; 6 established physical activity breaks for all meetings; 3 promoted physical activity standards and activities via posted information (i.e., posters, flyers); and 3 held fitness classes for the local community, potentially affecting over 2,500 faith community members. Similar PSE results have been found in other states. A full list of additional studies and publications can be found here: https://faithfulfamilies.com/who-we-are/evidence/. Classification: Research-tested

Evaluation Indicators

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate intervention progress and success.

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<th>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</th>
<th>Changes – Medium Term (MT)</th>
<th>Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)</th>
<th>Population Results (R)</th>
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<td>Sectors of Influence</td>
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Evaluation Materials

Center TRT developed an evaluation logic model and evaluation plan for Faithful Families. The logic model is intended to guide the evaluation process (as opposed to the planning process). The evaluation plan focuses on the implementation and effectiveness of Faithful Families in changing faith community policies and environments to support healthy eating and physical activity. The evaluation addresses the reach, adoption, implementation and effectiveness of Faithful Families in changing faith community environments to prevent obesity. Faithful Families provides faith communities with tools to assess each faith community’s unique assets and identify ways in which a faith community can use their assets to implement changes for community health. The curriculum includes an entry and exit form for participants who complete the nine-lesson class series. Additionally, The Faith Community Assessment is an audit tool that can measure changes in policies, systems, and environments to promote healthy eating and physical activity. It is meant to be filled out by a member of the faith community. It helps the faith community to better understand their resources, assets, and needs. The results of this assessment can be used to develop policy, systems, and environmental changes that can best support health in that particular faith community. The assessment can be completed online or by hand. If completing online, the results of the assessments can be downloaded as a PDF. The evaluation is a pre-post design with no comparison group. The evaluation plan provides guidance on evaluation questions and types and sources of data for both process and outcome evaluation. The Faithful Families Logic Model and Evaluation Plan can be found at on the Center TRT website: http://www.centertrt.org/?a=intervention&id=1090&section=10 Evaluation materials for the program can be found here: https://faithfulfamilies.com/tools-videos/tools/#CommunityAssessment

Additional Information

Website: The Faithful Families website (FaithfulFamilies.com) includes information about getting the program started, a blog, resources, webinar recordings, recognition and publications on the program. Contact Person: Dr. Annie Hardison-Moody Department of Agricultural and Human Sciences North Carolina State University Phone: (919) 515-8478 Email: amhardis@ncsu.edu