

Using a tailored report to stimulate capacity-appropriate evidence-based cancer education in African American churches

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Like any organization, churches' characteristics (e.g., size, staffing, leadership, their physical structure) vary tremendously and are closely associated with organizational capacity. In the present context we are interested in capacity for cancer education activities in African American churches which are frequent targets for health promotion interventions aimed at disparities reduction. Because health promotion interventions vary greatly in their complexity and the resource demands, it is important that a reasonable match be obtained between a church's capacity and the requirements of the intervention. We describe the process by which we used our Faith Based Organization Capacity Inventory (FBO-CI) to assess organizational capacity in 13 African American churches in three areas: (a) staffing and space, (b) health promotion experience, and (c) external collaborations. We used a community engaged process to develop a strengths-based feedback mechanism to provide the capacity data back to the church leadership, along with recommendations for evidence-based cancer education and other health promotion interventions based on (1) the church's capacity and (2) the stated health topic interests of the church. We developed a tailored church capacity report that aims to provide sensitive and appropriate feedback on the church's strengths, areas for further development, and linkages to evidence-based interventions as a way for the churches to build their health ministries. We also considered the role of church health policy in the report. We discuss implications for institutionalization, or integration of health into the structural aspects of the church ministry as a way to foster sustainability of cancer education programs.