

Instructor's Guide

Introduction

This instructor's guide is designed to provide you with helpful suggestions collected from a wide range of congregational health programs offered during the last 25 years, and to assist you as you organize your own health education programs. It provides general guidelines and resources that may be helpful as you implement your health education program. This guide will be updated regularly. Please feel free to reach out to us if you have ideas for how we can improve the guide or suggestions for additional resources.

Why offer congregational health education programs?

Religious institutions, through their professional and lay leaders, can play a crucial role in bringing information and people together. Congregational leaders have the opportunity and ability to reach people *before* they encounter a medical crisis. Furthermore, they can present the information in ways that can be understood and appreciated by the members of their congregations and communities, and they can design informational programs that overcome many of the obstacles often encountered in community health education programs. These leaders have the potential to empower people by giving them the knowledge and tools to maintain their health and independence.

Selecting leaders

Although nurses, especially those trained as a faith community nurses, are often ideal candidates to develop and lead a congregational health program, it is important to note that training in medicine or health care is not a requirement. In fact, many of the most effective leaders we have worked with do not have a background in health care. What has made them so successful is a passion for helping others, good organizational skills, and a willingness to learn.

Selecting topics for programs

One way to select topics is to survey members of your congregation. We have included at the end of this guide a survey that we have used in some of our programs. In addition to listing the topics covered in *Building Healthy Communities through Medical-Religious Partnerships*, it asks for suggestions. Please feel free to make copies of the survey to distribute, or you can use it as a model for one you develop.

Scheduling programs

You will need to decide whether to have your program connected to existing congregational programs or to have it at an entirely separate time. There are advantages to each.

One advantage of holding a health program during or immediately before or after a regularly scheduled congregational activity is that you will have a "built-in" audience. You will not have to devote too much of your preparation time to promoting the program to be sure that you have good attendance. Also, by scheduling it when people are already on site, you will make it easier for people who have busy schedules or travel limitations to attend.

Another important advantage is that you have the potential to reach individuals who may not realize they have a certain medical condition or that they would benefit from the information being offered. For example, if you organize a program on hypertension (high blood pressure) that includes blood pressure checks, there may be individuals who discover for the first time that they have high blood pressure and need to take steps to bring it under control. If you had offered this program at a separate time, these individuals might not have attended because they would not have realized it was a topic of concern to them.

You also may be able to reach people who would be reluctant to attend a program on a certain topic because they would not want to be seen by others as having a problem with that particular issue. For example, some individuals who are suffering from depression may not want this known by others. These individuals probably would feel more comfortable learning about depression during a session that was clearly intended to reach all or most congregants.

An advantage to holding some of your programs at a separate time is that usually you would be able to go into greater depth and present more resources. For example, if you want to hold a program on family caregiving and have representatives of several organizations that offer helpful resources (e.g., Alzheimer's Association, Meals on Wheels, and United Way 2-1-1), it would be better to schedule the program when you have enough time to cover all the topics and give all guest speakers enough time to share information about their services and answer questions.

Another advantage of scheduling a program at a separate time is that it probably would make it easier to reach individuals who are not members of the congregation but have an interest in the topic. This would also allow you to partner with other congregations as you organize and promote the program.

Where should you hold your programs?

Although accessibility should always be a consideration when scheduling a program, the setting for your program may depend on the topic you are covering and the audience you are trying to reach. For certain programs, especially those that include health screenings or that could elicit personal health information or concerns, it would be important to hold them in a setting that allows for private interactions between your speaker and individuals.

Arranging for speakers and representatives of organizations offering resources

Many organizations and agencies are equipped to provide speakers for health programs. Below are some suggestions.

- AARP
- Alzheimer's Association
- American Cancer Society
- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- American Lung Association
- Area Agency on Aging
- Bar Association

- City or county health department
- Colleges and universities
- Durable medical equipment suppliers
- Home health agencies
- Hospices
- Hospitals – Speakers Bureau or Community Relations Department
- Meals on Wheels
- Medical societies and other professional societies (e.g. psychologists, social workers)
- Mental Health America
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- National Kidney Foundation
- Nursing homes
- Pharmacies
- United Way

Additionally, often members of the congregation will have suggestions.

It is advisable to contact the individuals or organizations you want to participate in your programs at least six to eight weeks in advance. You should let them know the objective of the program, the audience, and how much time they would be expected to speak. You also should ask how they wish to be introduced and if they would be open to fielding questions. Additionally, you would need to inquire about their need for any equipment. Although some may be able to bring their own computer and projector, others may need to have these provided for them.

Depending on the topic, in addition to your presenter, you may want to have several agencies or organizations attend or provide information about services or resources related to the topic. For example, if the topic is diabetes and your speaker is an endocrinologist, you may want to invite a representative of a local hospital's diabetes education program and a representative from the local chapter of the American Diabetes Association.

Obtaining information materials for program

We have prepared and placed on the website handouts on the health topics covered in *Building Healthy Communities through Medical-Religious Partnerships*. These PDFs may be copied and distributed at your health programs. We also have prepared PowerPoint slides for most of the topics. These slides are designed to help organize and guide presentations.

In addition to the handouts on the website, you can find at the end of each chapter overview a list of websites for national organizations and community agencies that provide additional resources that can be downloaded and printed at no cost or ordered for a nominal fee. You also can refer to chapter 25 to identify national resources that might have materials or programs that could augment yours.

Promoting congregational health programs

The support of clergy is always helpful, especially if clergy are willing to take a visible leadership role. A good example of this is Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Sumner's active role in the Heart, Body, and Soul health ministry at Westminster-By-The-Sea Presbyterian (see Chapter 1 of *Building Healthy Communities through Medical-Religious Partnerships*). Another excellent example can be found in Chapter 2, with Rev. Dr. Donte Hickman of Southern Baptist Church leading the way for both blood pressure checks and flu vaccinations.

Personal testimonies also can be powerful. For example, if there are members of the congregation who are passionate about educating others on certain topics because of their own personal experiences (e.g., discovering they had diabetes or hypertension), their participation in promoting programs could be very impactful.

In addition to announcements during worship services or at other regularly scheduled congregational activities, information about health programs can be included in the announcements section of congregational bulletins, newsletters, and websites. Often it is helpful to print flyers that can be inserted in bulletins and also displayed at various locations.

Another strategy is to schedule your programs to align with national public awareness campaigns. For example, February is designated as American Heart Month, March as National Kidney Month, May as Mental Health Month, October as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and November as both National Diabetes Awareness Month and National Family Caregivers Month. A more extensive list of daily, weekly, and monthly health observances can be found at www.Healthfinder.gov.

Tips for program planning

Before planning a health education program, schedule a time to meet with the leadership in your congregation to gain their support. You will be able to attract more congregational members with leadership recognition and engagement. Be sure to provide preliminary information and objectives of the program, and explain how it will benefit the congregation and its surrounding community.

After you have obtained leadership support, create a timeline to help you stay on track. Begin planning your event at least three months in advance. Below are some suggestions of what should be included on your timeline.

- *Choose a date and time.* Consider other events that are taking place. Will the program be held alone or in conjunction with another event (e.g., during a support group or a prayer breakfast)?
- *Secure a location for the event.* Select a location in a congregational facility or at a community site that is convenient and accessible to attendees. Consider the amount of space needed, parking, access to rest rooms, and handicap access.
- *Establish a budget.* If funding is limited, enlist members of the congregation to donate healthy snacks and beverages. If soliciting vendors, ask them to donate items such as bags or pens as giveaways.

- *Order materials, brochures, and supplies* (see obtaining information materials for program). The handouts on our website may be printed but not modified. Be sure to provide a few extra copies for unexpected guests.
- *Plan refreshments*. Ensure that snacks are tied to the specific topic (e.g., diabetes).
- *Obtain volunteers for staffing*. Organizing a health education program takes a lot of time and energy. Enlist members of your organization and split up the tasks such as promotion, set-up, clean-up, registration, refreshments, evaluation, and follow-up. You may also want to partner with other local faith communities or community organizations.
- *Invite speaker(s) and/or vendors* (see arranging for speakers and representatives of organizations offering resources). The PowerPoint slides on our website may be used but cannot be modified. For questions, it is advisable to use cards. This allows you to screen the questions and can provide anonymity for questioner.
- *Confirm electronic needs* (e.g., laptop, projector, microphone, projector screen, extension cords)
- *Design floor plan*. Include the appropriate amount of tables and chairs to accommodate the speakers, vendors, and participants. Provide directional signage (e.g., parking, rest rooms).
- *Promote event* (see promoting congregational health programs). To increase participation in your health education program, you may want to consider providing childcare at the location of your event.
- *Follow-up*. A week before the event, remind congregational members of the event through e-mail, or ask your congregational leaders to make an announcement before or after the service. Confirm the speaker(s) and/or vendors and provide directions and specific instructions.
- *Evaluation*. Provide a brief evaluation form for participants and vendors that may include the overall opinion of the program; the length, date, time, and location; or ideas for future topics (see sample evaluation form).
- *Send thank you notes to speaker(s) and/or vendors*. Consider gift cards for those speakers who are doing it on their own time (not as part of their work).

The day of the event

On the day of the event, plan to arrive 1-2 hours early to set up the room (e.g., signage, registration refreshments, materials, electronic equipment). Make certain that doors to the building are open and the route from parking to the space where the event is being held is clear. Ensure the proper temperature in the room and confirm that the rest rooms are clean. Test the audio visual equipment (e.g., laptop, projector, microphone) to be sure everything is functioning as expected and the speaker(s) and video (if applicable) can be easily heard and seen from the back of the room. Collect evaluations before guests leave.