



**Jefferson County Alabama Place Matters Team
In Partnership with Congregations for Public Health**

I. Social Determinants of Health – Team Focus

Social conditions are major determinants of health. They shape individual biology, individual risk behaviors, environmental exposures, and access to resources that promote health. There are differences in life expectancy and health among people with different levels of education and income, different types of occupations, and among people who live in neighborhoods characterized by differing levels community wealth and infrastructure.

- a. **Our Vision** is to lead a city-wide initiative to improve the health status of African Americans living in Jefferson County Alabama through public health advocacy.
- b. **Our Mission** is to establish public health advocacy infrastructures, facilitate strategic planning, implement best practice programs and support specific action initiatives that will lead to improved health outcomes of citizens in Jefferson County Alabama.
- c. **Our Focus** is to identify and address the economic, social, environmental and behavioral determinants that can improve health outcomes for African Americans in Jefferson County Alabama.
- d. **Social Determinants of Health:**

We know that social determinants of health (1) have a direct impact on health, (2) predict the greatest proportion of health status variance, (3) structure health behaviors, and (4) interact with each other to produce health. Therefore the **Jefferson County Alabama Place Matters Team** will focus on the following social determinants of health to address the overweight and obesity in Jefferson County Alabama. Specifically we will focus on the following:

- **Social Environments** – To address to growing problem of violence as critical issue for lack of physical activity in the community and at local schools as it relates to safety and violence issues that prevent individual from being physically active in their communities.
- **Physical Environments** – To address the inadequacies of the environments and facilities in the targeted communities with respect to local fitness zones.

- **Healthy Child Development** – To address the overwhelming problem of childhood obesity (physical activity and nutrition) in Jefferson County Alabama.

The facts below are cited from the **Alabama Obesity Task Force *Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of Overweight and Obesity in Alabama.***

- Alabama is currently in an overweight and obesity epidemic situation regarding the health of its citizens.
- The nonprofit group Trust for America’s Health, named Alabama as the “fattest state” in the nation in October 2004.
- Alabama ranked first in adult obesity based on 2003 data, with 28.4 percent of adults in the obese category.
- Sixty –three percent of Alabama are overweight and or obese according to the BMI readings ≥ 30 and overweight is a BMI Of 25 to 29.9.
- Alabama youth are overweight according to the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) which showed 14 percent of youth were at risk for being overweight with an additional 14 percent already overweight, as defined by BMI at or above the 95th percentile for age.

II. Infrastructure - Team Partnerships

We seek to significantly reduce morbidity and mortality related to obesity that plague the impoverished and underserved residents of Jefferson County Alabama. We will strive to build a strong team in Jefferson County and the State of Alabama to facilitate the public health advocacy issue of overweight and obesity.

III. Accomplishments – Team Progress

The **Jefferson County Alabama Place Matters Team** will continue to develop a strategic plan which will focus on the three main stages of Public Health Advocacy: information , strategy and action. Specifically, the team will first build on the foundation established and develop a strong team to address the issue at hand.

The team will conduct a gap analysis and identify key stake holders for the team. The following list below is key participants:

- Existing coalitions with similar goals and objectives
- Community groups with similar goals and objectives
- Health service providers
- Health provider organizations
- Journalists

- Lawyers and other legal experts
- Legislators
- Private sector individuals
- Researchers and Academicians
- Research Funding agencies
- Community representatives
- Medical representatives
- Media Representatives
- UAB School of Nursing

The **Jefferson County Alabama Place Matters Team** will

- Recruit individuals who have expertise in the area of obesity, research, public health policy, government officials, media etc.
- Seek sources of funding
- Partner with existing resources and services

Meetings have been held with local businesses, community leaders, state and governmental officials to ask for their support and collaboration with this project. Currently, we have obtained support from the following:

Jackie Floyd Roosley, President of ACIPCO - Finley Neighborhood Association

Mary Moore, Alabama State Representative (59th District), who has agreed to add and addendum to a legislative bill on obesity, listing A Place Matters Initiative as one of the leaders in providing community education on obesity.

ACIPCO Pipe Co., was asked to assist A Place Matters with the creation of Health and Wellness spaces (walking trails) within the community, so that residents will have access to safe places to exercise.

IV. Challenges – Team Challenges

The **Jefferson County Alabama Place Matters Team** is determining how to intervene at various levels of government and develop and establish relationships with key stakeholders.

Key challenges include the following:

- Securing necessary founding for change
- Developing policies and procedures for obtaining support from key stakeholders

V. **Community - Support and key components of the TJCAPMT strategy**

The Jefferson County Alabama Place Matters Team will build on the infrastructures currently established. For example,

- We are operating under the umbrella of **Congregations for Public Health**. Congregations for Public Health (CPH) was organized in 2002 with on-going support and technical assistance from the **University of Alabama at Birmingham's (UAB) School of Public Health**. CPH obtained its 501(c)3 status in March 2004 and is a well respected community faith-based organization in Jefferson County Alabama. The vision statement of CPH is Congregations reaching out to embrace their neighborhoods with programs and services to eliminate disparities and achieve optimal health, education, social, and economic well-being.

CPH's member churches range in size from 150 to 1500. CPH serves 6 of the oldest and poorest communities in Jefferson County. Poverty in these communities ranges from 44.2% to 85.1%, representing some of the most economically poor areas in the state.

CPH's neighborhood outreach capacity touches almost ½ of African Americans in Jefferson County and ¼ of Alabama's African American population, reaching 115,000 minorities underserved in these churches and surrounding neighborhoods within a 1-mile radius of each church. 92% are African American (primarily US-born); 1% are Hispanic/Latino. 23% are age 5-19; 48% are age 20-54; and 21% are age 55-85. 54% of this population is female.

CPH's well established strong relationship with the UAB School of Public Health brings a nationally recognized research institution; one of only thirty three Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – **Prevention Research Centers (PRC) through the Center for the Study of Community Health**; academic technical support; access to physicians and experts in the field.

- Utilizing the **Alabama Obesity Task Force** recommendations as established in the Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of Overweight and Obesity in Alabama.
- Utilizing the recommendations of the **Jefferson County Department of Health's** Health Action Priorities for Jefferson County document – Our Community Roadmap to Health.
- The **Alabama Department of Public Health** infrastructure, programs and statistics.

It is apparent that the faith based community must begin to move outside church walls into communities to address existing health disparities.

The plan is to create a comprehensive health and education program targeting obesity. We seek to:

- Identify areas where access to proper health care is not readily available and seek solutions to correct this problem.
- Create ways to encourage people to become more responsible about their own health care.
- Provide proper training in nutrition and fitness to help remove the problem of obesity. Work to place fitness zones in communities where people can exercise and sustain good fitness habits.
- Identify and engage funding opportunities to support promoting social, economic, and health policy changes.
- Develop relationships and work to gain stakeholder participation.

The community outreach which is called (NOSE) shall be used to develop a one mile radius of information dissemination and ownership through the church consortium members. Our intent is to build capacity for the Public Health Consortium and identify additional resources to help with this mission. We envision an increased access to health care and comprehensive training components to support an ongoing health education and intervention effort.