

Culture is Health with REACH

Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health

Historical Context

ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change) Coalition has laid the foundation for Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) since 2009. A group of multi-sectoral partners collectively envisioned: ending health inequities in chronic diseases for African Americans/Blacks in Multnomah County. The coalition advocates the use of communication, policy, system and environmental (PSE) change strategies to increase access to healthy foods, improve community design by connecting safe and accessible places for physical activity, offering tobacco cessation programming and breastfeeding support in the places people live, work, worship and study. ACHIEVE coalition accomplishments over the years include:

- Community policy and environmental assessments in over 60 community settings across jurisdictions
- Policies and space changes implemented in over 20 faith settings
- Co-development of Multnomah County Healthy Retail Initiative
- Tobacco Retail Licensing with and extensive community engagement process
- Successful REACH grant application

REACH Overview

The Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant is federally funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with a focus to reducing health disparities among populations with the highest burden of chronic disease (i.e., hypertension, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and obesity).

REACH 2.0 - Our Way Forward

Multnomah County Health Department's REACH 2.0 (Multco REACH) builds upon long-standing partnerships to positively impact social and environmental influences on health. REACH leverages Community-Based Participatory Approaches (CBPA) that blends preventative public health strategies to improve and preserve the health of the local Black/African American and African Immigrant/Refugee communities. The ACHIEVE Coalition and REACH partners convene to develop and implement culturally informed, evidence-based policy and system changes that shift paradigms to provide services and support proportionate to what's needed in addressing health inequities.

REACH 2.0 - Theory of Change

Multnomah County Health Department (MCHD) REACH grounds its work by embracing community strengths and wisdom as protective factors. The REACH theory of change seeks to break and interrupt the persistent intergenerational and inequitable distribution of social and economic forces that create disproportionate burdens of health. The work of REACH spans across the life-course and integrates infants, youth, adults and elders within their social and physical environments.

REACH 2.0 is a continued effort towards a comprehensive model of health to advance positive health outcomes.

To improve and reduce health inequity, it is vital to address the impact social determinants of health through multi-sectoral systems and policy actions. REACH 2.0 will empower community members and partners to become creators for solutions that makes the healthiest choice the easiest choices.



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REACH 2.0 Strategies

REACH strategies build capacity within organizations to lead communication, policy, system, and environmental changes that increases access to community health programs and nutritious foods, increase economic development opportunities, and improve community design to connect safe and accessible places for physical activity. The Multco REACH program utilizes the following three intervention domains:

Nutrition

- Increase access to healthier foods through food hubs and explore innovative practices and enhance healthier food procurement sales.
- Establish healthy nutrition standards (i.e. childcare settings, schools, faith-based settings, jails, etc.)
- Make improvements to local programs/systems (i.e. SUN School's Food Pantries and WIC's Farm Direct Nutrition Program)
- Increase continuity of care/community support for breastfeeding (i.e. campaign, increasing the number of AA/B lactation consultants, etc.)

Physical Activity

- Establish new or improved pedestrian, bicycle, or transit transportation systems that are combined with new or improved land use or environmental design

Community-Clinical Linkages

- Promote the use of appropriate, locally available and culturally specific programs
- Expand the use of health professionals and increase referrals

Community Partnerships

ACHIEVE Coalition partners, meets monthly to provide guidance, prioritize needs, raise awareness to catalyze collective action, and facilitate community engagement and support. The Coalition includes community members, representatives from local community organizations and faith based agencies, along with County and state agency staff.

Connect with the REACH Team:

Yugen Rashad, ACHIEVE Coalition Coordinator
yugen.rashad@multco.us

Helen Kidane, REACH Nutrition Specialist
helen.kidane@multco.us

Charlene McGee, REACH Program Manager
charlene.a.mcgee@mutlco.us

Andrew Campbell, REACH Physical Activity Specialist
andrew.campbell@multco.us

Tameka Brazile, REACH Principal Investigator
tameka.brazile@mutlco.us

Keara Rodela, REACH Community-Clinical Linkages Specialist
keara.rodela@multco.us

Taylor Ford, Program Communications Specialist
taylor.ford@multco.us

