

# Tennessee

## Working Together to Reduce the Burden of Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes

### Public Health Problem

Nearly 42,000 African Americans living in North Nashville were at greater risk for early death and disability from cardiovascular disease and diabetes than white residents, according to data from the Nashville Metropolitan Public Health Department. African Americans also had much higher death rates than white residents: more than 215 African Americans per 100,000 in North Nashville died of heart disease vs. 141 whites per 100,000 (rates are age-adjusted). There was also a significant disparity for stroke, with 54.8 deaths per 100,000 for North Nashville residents vs. 29.9 deaths for their white neighbors. Rates were no better for complications of type 2 diabetes: 54.3 African Americans per 100,000 died of diabetes vs. only 14.1 of the county's white residents.

### Program Example

The Nashville project has mobilized four action teams focusing on specific risk factors, and a Community Action Plan that stresses that teams—in conjunction with community leaders, residents, health professionals and others—promote community readiness to address environmental supports and barriers in North Nashville. All activities are designed to promote healthy behavior changes including healthy eating, regular exercise, no smoking, accessing quality care, and getting screened for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Team members are trained and motivated to instigate changes in procedures, practices, and systems so healthy behavior changes are achieved and maintained over time. Community-based interventions include nutrition and exercise classes, walking clubs, Tai Chi demonstrations, cook-offs, and smoking cessation classes. In addition, local health clinics have expanded their hours, local agencies have offered residents new opportunities for disease screenings, and team members have helped neighborhoods improve the physical environment. Also under way are several faith-based interventions, including the Faith and Health course offered through the American Baptist College and work with individual congregations in North Nashville.

### Implications and Impact

The Nashville project is designed to increase people's readiness to change important lifestyle behaviors including nutrition, regular exercise, no smoking, and screening. In addition, environmental barriers to change are being addressed. The program also is working with groups to develop support systems that will help to maintain these healthy changes over time. The project has developed and launched a Web-based data collection system that will help health officials to evaluate and analyze the process, community actions, and capacity-building activities.

### Contact Information

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