FORWARD

Educators trained in public health and practitioners in health care focus on influencing individuals' knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and community norm change to improve health and reduce disease. The public health community has come to realize that health is not just about individual behavior choices; it is also about the social conditions of where people live, work, learn, play, and worship.

Saving Our Legacy, African Americans for Smoke Free Safe Places (SOL Project), and a Social Determinants of Health Planning Committee comprised of health educators, public servants, health care practitioners, and non-profits came together to develop a community action plan that addresses social determinants of health among African Americans in Sacramento California.

The SOL Project is funded by the California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP), who understands the importance of advancing health equity to improve tobacco control and prevention efforts. Partners such as the SOL Project are collaborating with non-traditional partners to refocus attention from individual behaviors like smoking to a broader focus on social determinants of health that influence disparate tobacco usage and disproportionate rates of illness and mortality for African Americans.

As a first step toward improving health inequity among African Americans living in Sacramento County, the *Strategies To Improve Health Inequity Where African Americans Live, Work, Learn, Play and Worship In Sacramento California Community Action Plan* (also known as The CAP or CAP) will explore disparities related to heart disease and type 2 diabetes; will review tobacco use and obesity as two risk factors for these disparities; and will review educational attainment, economic development, racial discrimination/social justice as three social determinants of health - that when improved can greatly impact and eventually eliminate health inequities in this population.

The CAP examines heart disease and type 2 diabetes as a first step in tackling health disparities among African Americans. The CAP contains a fraction of obtainable promising practices that influence health disparities and inequalities faced by African Americans. It is our hope that the CAP will spark a movement among organizations, medical providers, businesses, community advocates, and residents to implement more strategic and synchronized efforts around social determinants of health. More collaborative efforts are needed to positively change historical, institutional, and policy practices that affect the health outcomes of African American residents.

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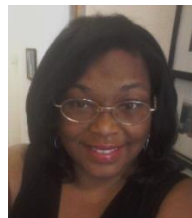
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The public health community has come to realize that health is not just about individual behavior choices, it is also about the social conditions of where people live, work, learn, worship and play. Saving Our Legacy, African Americans for Smoke Free Safe Places (SOL Project) and a Social Determinants of Health Planning Committee of health educators, public servants, health care practitioners, and non-profits came together to develop a community action plan that addresses social determinants of health among African Americans in Sacramento County.

The resulting *Strategies to Improve Health Equity Where African Americans Live, Work, Learn, Worship and Play in Sacramento, California A Community Action Plan* is a guide to reducing and eventually eliminate disparate conditions in Sacramento County among African American residents. The Community Action Plan (CAP) outlines health disparities related to Heart Disease and Diabetes, outlines Tobacco Use and Obesity as two risk factors of health disparities, and reviews promising practice examples in areas of Educational Attainment, Economic Development and Racial Discrimination/ Social Justice as three of the five major areas of Social Determinants of Health recognized by the World Health Organization. This plan, when implemented by organizations that have the capacity, can improve the health and wellbeing of African American community members with measurable results.

The Community Action Plan is intended to be the first of many, where diverse sectors of non-traditional partners collaborate to engage in efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes for African Americans in Sacramento County. The CAP development was based on an understanding that there is no one strategy, individual, nor organization that would be or can be the trailblazer to eliminate health disparities and improve all inequities related to social determinants of health. However, these efforts can be improved by collective expertise, commitment and determination from organizations and individuals to developing and executing short and long term plans with measurable outcomes. It is our hope that this project will spark a movement to implement more strategic and synchronized efforts in the greater Sacramento area addressing the many social determinants of health to improve health outcomes of all residents.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Where we live, work, learn, play and worship provide strong indicators of how long we will live and the quality of that life while we are alive. The social determinants of health describe the health behaviors, clinical care, social & economic factors, and physical environments under which we live that are directly linked to health outcomes. Public health professionals have long focused on the elements of individual health behaviors and access to clinical care as methods for improving population health. However, there is a growing body of evidence that indicates factors such as educational attainment, economic opportunities and wealth, and racial and social discrimination have a greater impact on health outcomes. These three factors were selected by the Social Determinants of Health Committee to take a closer look at how they affect the lives of African Americans in the greater Sacramento area. Priorities and activities were identified to advance these factors for African American communities. Stakeholders are encouraged to adopt these priorities, integrate them into their current efforts to improve the health of communities and collaborate with like-minded individuals to facilitate greater impact.

Educational attainment
The number of years a person goes to school and their level of education such as securing a high school diploma or college degree effects health in a number of ways and has implications on the social, economic, and environmental opportunities that will be available to them over the course of their life.

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Priority: Increase the number of African Americans graduating from high school and college.
- *Increase the number of African American children attending pre-school.*
- *Increase the number of African American youth obtaining high school, college and post graduate education.*

Economic Development

Longer life expectancy, lower rates of chronic disease, greater food security and more physical activity all have a strong correlation with income and wealth. A higher level of financial resources allows individuals and families to make different choices about education, employment, food purchases, consistency in taking medications, safety and exposure to health hazards (e.g. poor air quality, power lines, fast food, etc.) in their neighborhoods, and many other factors that have positive health effects.

Priority: Increase the Income of African Americans.
- *Increase minimum wage to a livable wage.*
- *Build wealth in the African American community.*

Racial Discrimination and Social Justice

Racial discrimination plays a significant role in increased levels of unemployment, high levels of stress, residential segregation, reduced access to goods and services, lower educational attainment and low socioeconomic status, All of which have been shown to be linked to poor health outcomes.

Priority: Eliminate Racial Discrimination and Social Injustices that Affect Health.
- *Reduce racial bias in healthcare systems.*
- *Expose industry target marketing (I.e., tobacco, sweetened beverage and fast food companies) to African Americans.*

Health policies and evidence-based programs that address multiple social determinants of health simultaneously are needed to reduce disparities and improve health outcomes among African Americans.

MECHANISMS OF CHANGE

Effective public health, health promotion, and chronic disease management programs help people maintain and improve health, reduce disease risks, and manage chronic illness. They can improve the well-being and self-sufficiency of individuals, families, organizations, and communities. Usually, such successes require behavior change at many levels, (e.g., individual, environmental or systems, and community policy change). It is important for organizations and collaborations that set out to improve the health of African Americans to identify, design and implement interventions at multiple levels in order to produce positive change within their communities.

Individual Behavior Change

Individual Behavior Change focuses on the individual, changing their knowledge, beliefs or attitude in order to change their behavior towards a particular health condition.

Environmental/Systems Change

Contemporary health promotion involves efforts to change organizational behavior, as well as the physical and social environment of communities. It is also about developing and advocating for policies that create opportunities for people to make healthy choices.

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Public Policy

Public policy changes respond to how social systems function and change. They offer longer-term strategies that work in a variety of settings, such as health care institutions, schools, worksites, community groups, and government agencies.

Understanding and creating local networks that support change at the individual, environmental/ systems, and public policy levels may garner greater impact overall in improving the lives of African Americans.

REDUCING DISPARITIES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SACRAMENTO COUNTY

African Americans suffer disproportionately from inequalities. The information below looks at how African Americans in Sacramento County fair with respect to other ethnic groups related to key social determinants of health.

Educational attainment

An education gap exists among the different racial and ethnic groups in Sacramento. For African Americans, the highest level of education most completed is grade 12 at 33.2%, compared to Asians whose highest level of education most completed is a bachelors' degree at 32.9%. [5]

Income

The average household size is two people and the median income is $55,846. For Blacks, the median income is $39,471 (2008-2012).[2,4]

Health status of African Americans
* 29.9% currently smoke.[5]
* 67.7% are overweight or obese.[5]
* 11% have diabetes.[1]

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy for African Americans is lowest among all racial and ethnic groups in the county at 73.8 years compared to Hispanics at 87.7 years, Asian/Pacific Islanders at 84.1 years and Caucasians at 78.6 years.

GOAL: ELIMINATE HEART DISEASE AND TYPE 2 DIABETES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

The CAP provides strategies and promising practices that were identified from a variety of resources and entities who have successfully implemented programs to improve Social Determinants of Health for the African American community. Coordinated efforts among stakeholders in Sacramento County to implement the recommended strategies will increase evidence-based improvements in the health of African Americans.

Eliminate Heart Disease

Strategy #1: Raise awareness of symptoms and signs of heart attack and stroke through cultural, linguistic, and gender education initiatives.

Strategy #2: Increase primary prevention efforts to avoid Heart Disease among African Americans through: smoking cessation, management of blood pressure (BP), weight control, and dietary and physical activity counseling.

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Strategy #3: Comprehensive management of risk factors in those with established Heart Disease.

Eliminate Diabetes
Strategy #1: Increase implementation of evidenced-based diabetes prevention and management programs in underserved African American communities.
Strategy #2: Improve access to supermarkets in underserved areas and incentivize the sale of healthier foods and beverages in underserved areas.
Strategy #3: Increase access to outdoor recreational facilities and enhance walkability and bike-ability in neigbhorhoods.
Strategy #4: Reduce barriers to healthy meal planning and preparation by increasing resources and social support for a healthy diet.

Eliminate New and Emerging Tobacco Product Use
Strategy #1: Foster collaboration between community-based organizations (CBOs) serving African Americans and those organizations working in the tobacco control movement to broaden their efforts to reduce use.
Strategy #2: Work jointly on policy or systems change with local, state and national entities to eliminate the use and targeting of flavored tobacco, including menthol and other candy flavorings towards African Americans and youth in particular.
Strategy #3: Increase understanding of community perspective and needs for development of effective community interventions.

Eliminate Obesity
Strategy #1: Ensure state-level leadership and coordination of statewide obesity prevention efforts to create active living and healthy eating environments and work toward the elimination of health inequities.
Strategy #2: Collaborate with existing programs local and statewide to implement joint public education campaigns that promote healthy eating and active living.
Strategy #3: Work with government, worksites, health care providers, and schools to improve access to healthy eating and physical activity.

Summary
The Social Determinants of Health Planning Committee elected to explore the impact of social and economic factors on the health of African Americans. Developing priorities, strategies and promoting promising practices that can be implemented in a coordinated and synergistic effort between community-based organizations, private business, and local, state, and national government endeavors is necessary to improve social and economic factors. Understanding how educational attainment, economic opportunities and wealth, and racial and social discrimination contribute to health outcomes among African Americans is critical to making improvements in the health of this population. Successful strategies employed to improve the health of African Americans have included increasing job training, connecting youth and formerly incarcerated with jobs, creating access to healthier foods, building safe and open green spaces for physical activity, policies that support early and low-cost health screenings, revitalizing neighborhoods, and investing in education.

This Community Action Plan will be shared with key thought and opinion leaders and those who want to move from dialogue towards action. It is intended to inspire more plans that lead a movement of addressing other social determinants of health and other health issues in order for the African American community to live well and prosper *by not only reducing, but eliminating disparities for African Americans in Sacramento California.*