Faith Communities:
Advocates for Healthy Public Policy

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With thanks to the Rev. Dr. Marian McClure-Taylor
Executive Director, Kentucky Council of Churches
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Discuss the role of KY faith communities in developing & sustaining advocacy for policies that support healthy communities:

Analyze methods and processes for developing community and state partnerships for healthy public policy, education, and advocacy using the Principles of Good Practice.
Faith Communities: Advocates for Healthy Public Policy
How does public health policy/healthy policy fit with community development?
Public Health Policy is:

“WHAT WE, AS A SOCIETY, DO COLLECTIVELY TO ASSURE THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH PEOPLE CAN BE HEALTHY”

Institute of Medicine, 1988
Determinants of Health

- Policies and Interventions
- Individual
- Social Environment
- Biology
- Physical Environment
- Access to Quality Health Care

Behavior
Healthy Public Policy refers to policy initiatives that support and sustain individual and community well-being.

Healthy public policies address issues such as adequate housing, food security, safe environments, and essential social and health services.
Policy Development: Public Health Policy - Healthy Public Policy

**INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS**
- Uneducated
- Unemployed
- Poor opportunity
- Nutrition
- Deteriorated housing (poor plumbing, etc.)
- Child molestation
- Strained family functions

**COMMUNITY PROBLEMS**
- Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, high-school drop-outs, poor environment, toxic waste sites, child abuse, dysfunctional families

**INDIVIDUALS ENTRENCHED IN A LIFE OF HOPELESSNESS**

**COMMUNITIES ENTRENCHED IN A SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS**

**DISEASE**
- Infections, viruses, cancer, heart disease, stroke, motor vehicle accidents, family violence
- Drugs, infant mortality, crack babies, teenage pregnancy, community violence, AIDS, quality of life, crime, single family households

**POLICY**

**PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY**
- Health (lifestyles, environment, health care delivery system, biology)
- Service systems build on inadequacies and promote deficiencies

**HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY**
- Education, environment, housing, employment, social, economic, health
- Communities build capacity and concentrate on strengths

*Figure 2-1* Difference between Public Health Policy and Healthy Public Policy
Developing such policies requires multiple sectors of the community to partner in non-partisan policy advocacy at the local, state, and national levels.
Intersectoral Partnerships

Anderson & McFarlane: Community as Partner
People working together to create community conditions that promote and support physical, mental, emotional, & spiritual well-being.

- Assessment
- Planning & Policy development
- Assurance
Overview

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Promote active and representative participation toward enabling all community members to meaningfully influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Engage community members in learning about and understanding community issues, and the economic, social, environmental, political, psychological, and other impacts associated with alternative courses of action.

Incorporate the diverse interests and cultures of the community in the community development process; and disengage from support of any effort that is likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged members of a community.

Work actively to enhance the leadership capacity of community members, leaders, and groups within the community.

Be open to using the full range of action strategies to work toward the long-term sustainability and well being of the community.
Community Development is Action that…

- Helps people to recognize and develop their ability and potential and organize themselves to respond to problems and needs which they share.
- Supports the establishment of strong communities that control and use assets to promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life.
- Enables community and public agencies to work together to improve the quality of government.

(Scottish Community Development Centre: http://www.scdc.org.uk/who/what-is-community-development/)
WHAT IS JUSTICE?
**Legal, Ethical, & Theology Perspectives**

- **Law:** upholding of fair treatment and due reward in accordance with honor, standards, or the law

- **Ethics:** principle of moral rightness that denotes fairness and equity

- **Theology:** righteousness; fairness, the restoration of a situation or environment which promotes equity & harmony in a community
"Justice is to sort out what belongs to whom and to return it to them."

This implies that there is a right distribution of goods and access to the sources of life.
Justice defined: 
(Distributive) Social Justice

- The fair, equal, or just allocation of "benefits, and burdens" within society.
  - Benefits include a variety of resources and material and social goods
  - Burdens refer to responsibilities such taxes, military service, and location or proximity to environmental hazards.

Silva, Fletcher, & Sorrell, 2008, pp. 129-130.
Although a major American ideal is equality, this ideal has far to go before it becomes reality.

In response to the basic inequities existing in our society, both liberal democratic theory and Christian liberation theology demand that distributive or social justice show preference for vulnerable and least advantaged populations.

Brueggemann, 1997, p. 5.
Health as an issue of justice

- All human should have access to resources for promoting, achieving, and sustaining health
- Resources for individual and community well-being are unequally distributed
- As a social justice issue, health advocacy is a major initiative of the Kentucky Council of Churches (KCC).
CASE STUDY

ADVOCACY FOR HEALTH CARE ACCESS
Methods

- Participant observation
- Document review (Minutes, Policy Statement, Publications, etc)
- Key Informant Interviews
- Formative evaluation (Years 1, 2, 3, & 4)
Overview
Kentucky Council of Churches (KCC) is an organization of Christian faith-based communities whose purposes, in part, are to be:

- a common ministry for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, and
- a Christian voice of conscience and a voice for the voiceless.*
To this end, KCC advocates for disadvantaged and vulnerable populations on issues such as:

- Justice
- Health & access to health care
- Education
- Anti-racism
- Housing & food security
- Environment/Creation Care
CASE STUDY FOCUS:

Health Advocacy
KCC Justice Commission: Access to resources for health/wellbeing is an issue of justice
- Health ministry/FCN presence in all churches
- Grassroots & state advocacy for health
- Health Program Unit (HPU) was created
- HPU developed partnership with Kentucky Faith Community Nurse Network (KFCNN)
Kentucky Council of Churches (KCC)

Kentucky Faith Community Nurse Network (KFCNN)
KFCNN is a network of FCN practice, education, & research coordinators

Goals

- Coordinate statewide FCN activities
- Develop a statewide resource network for FCNs
- Increase the presence of health ministries in KY
Health ministry/FCN presence in all churches

Grassroots & state advocacy for health

KFCNN – grassroots advocacy of “going with” (i.e. assisting people with access to healthcare and accompanying them as necessary.)

KCC - grassroots & state advocacy for health and health care
Funding support

- Sustainable advocacy initiative funded by the Foundation for a Health Kentucky (FHK)
  - Provided funding for KCC to develop sustainable health advocacy partnerships
  - Partnership Development: Provided linkages among various state-level organizations involved in various aspects of advocacy related to health & wellbeing of Kentuckians
  - Technical Assistance re: sustainability
Expanded Partners/Participants*

- KCC Member Faith Communities
- Local churches/Health ministries
- Colleges of Nursing
- Healthcare Systems/Health ministries
- Public Health Departments/Organizations

*Participation does not connote institutional endorsement
Collaborating Advocacy Groups

(Examples)

Coalition Logos
Dialogue & Sharing

Common focus: Access to health resources & health care

Action: State level non-partisan advocacy related to dissemination of accurate information about the “Affordable Care Act” (ACA) pre and post passage

Issue: Danger of focus on larger issues being derailed by ACA
Dialogue, dialogue, dialogue…

Issues identified at local/community level

- Different perspectives on level of advocacy
- Concern about separation of church and state

Question: Is an advocacy an appropriate activity for churches/ church members to be involved in?
Step 1: Articulate the theological foundations of health advocacy

Step 2: Identify health advocacy partners

Step 3: Explore partnership possibilities & challenges

Step 4: Identify a mutually acceptable advocacy issue
Theological Perspectives on Advocacy
[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but
- to do justice, and
- to love kindness, and
- to walk humbly with your God?
Let's examine the context of Micah 6:8 to answer this. Micah was the voice of the village peasant who spoke against the greedy, grasping power of the state. In Micah's actions, we find several implications for what it means to "do justice." First, Micah became an advocate for the disadvantaged, giving voice to the hopes, fears, and perceptions determinative of social policy. Second, Micah addressed matters of policy formation; He focused on issues of economic injustice affecting the people -- issues related to the access to and control of life-sustaining goods. In other words, Micah critiqued the system of social control using an ethics of justice. Third, Micah spoke truth to power. He addressed the leadership of the state, the ones with social power who benefitted from the status quo.

Brueggemann, 1997, p. 5.
A Biblical Perspective: Micah

- **Advocacy** for those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged

- **Policy Formation**
  - Issues identification
  - Issues analysis

- **Speak Truth to Power**
  - Formal leadership
  - Social power
Putting it together
Faith-based advocacy with local churches

“DOING JUSTICE” TOGETHER
Project Advocacy Aims

- **Short-term:**
  - An increase in church-goers’ consciousness about the moral basis for all people to have access to quality, effective, health care, and acceptance that this topic and advocacy about it are appropriate to deal with in church life.

- **Medium term:**
  - An increase in church-based groups’ engagement in advocacy for access to quality, affordable health care for all people.

- **Long-term:**
  - An increase in the self-perpetuating (institutionalized) capacity for and practices of advocacy in church structures and networks.
Becoming Advocates:
- Collaboration & coalition-building
- Stakeholder engagement

Speaking Truth to Power:
- Issues-framing & messaging
- Building relations with state, regional, & local policy-makers

Addressing Matters of Policy Formation:
- Developing Educational Programs
- Convenings
Advocacy partnerships developed with:

- Other Advocacy Organizations
  - e.g. AARP Kentucky, Kentucky Voices for Health, Kentucky Youth Advocates, Smoke-free Kentucky, KY Cancer Consortium, KY Mental Health Association
- Local health departments (Health officers, PHNs)
- Faith Community Nurse Networks (most also PHNs)
- Judicatory (leadership) of member communities
- Leaders of local parishes & congregations
Visits to partners (see previous slide) to discuss shared issues & advocacy interests

Visits to local/state policy-makers to discuss mutual healthy public policy issues & how KCC can support efforts to address these issues

Visits with local faith communities to discuss health advocacy as a justice issue that should be addressed by local churches
Story-gathering: vignettes illustrating issues & problems with health care access/ACA implementation are be gathered by local PHNs & faith community nurses

Issue/message-framing:
- Talking points & district-specific vignettes for policy-makers
- Advocacy messages for Capwiz dissemination
- Bulletin inserts, sermon guides for churches
Met with Governor and State & Local Policy-Makers to

- Disseminate accurate information about ACA (pre & post-passage) through faith communities
- Identify access issues by vulnerable populations during implementation of ACA
- Identify ongoing & emergent issues/problems related to health care access and convey this information to policy-makers
Policy Formation: Develop Educational Materials

- Educational materials for Kentuckians
  - Slide shows: Health Care Reform
  - Curricular Resources: Training congregational health advocates
  - Speakers’ Bureau

- Educational materials for policy-makers & staff
  - KCC *Intercom* newsletter articles
  - KCC *Legislative Alert*

- Legislative Alert System
  - Messages for *Capwiz*
**Policy Formation: Convenings Initiated by KCC**

- **KCC Annual Meeting:**
  - Health Care Reform/ACA presentations, display, informational packets

- **Meeting with PHNs/FCNs:**
  - Shared/discussed use of educational materials prepared by KCC

- **Meeting with top-level KY religious leaders:**
  - Using KCC materials
  - Training congregational/parish health advocates

- **Meeting with denominational social justice advocates to**
  - *Promote the use of the curricular materials that are designed to educate parishioners and motivate congregants to care about and strive for quality, affordable healthcare for all.*
  - *Support congregations in community organizing efforts*
Evaluation and Implications
Outcome: Sustained advocacy partnerships

- Shared development of educational materials & advocacy messages
- Mutual requests for support re: public health policy initiatives
- Replication of KCC-developed health advocacy materials by partners
- Continuing joint health promotion ventures with PHNs & other state and local partners

Lessons:

- Social justice is a shared value that supports advocacy partnerships between the public health enterprise & faith communities
- Faith communities can be significant leaders in health advocacy, rather than venues to be used by others
Outcome: Increased advocacy at the local congregational level

Lesson: Members of faith communities can become informed advocates of public health & healthy public policies

*See newsletter (next slide) & KCC video (at http://www.kycouncilofchurches.org/health-ministries/)
Healing a church and community

By Jennifer Stanton, R.N., BSN, IBCLC

The Rev. Ellen Grinters, associate minister and health ministries coordinator at St. John’s Memorial AME Zion Church, is focused on healing her church and the community. Rev. Grinters works with the support of Pastor Jacqueline King to spread the message of Jesus Christ as “healer of the whole person.”

“Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry and cared for the spiritual needs of the whole person,” Grinters said. “That is what he and I do, health ministries members are trying to do every day.”

Rev. Grinters serves as a health board member for the Kentucky Board of Discipleship. She provides holistic counseling, organizes mental health programming and sponsors discount prescription cards,coordinates a team that delivers meals and arranges for education on heart and brain health. She also promulgates HIV education and testing, schedules monthly blood pressure checks, leads a group that visits teens at the Jefferson County Youth Center and holds free health fairs. In addition, the health ministry team provides food and clothing to the homeless once a Saturday every month.

Rev. Grinters’ ears are open to the needs of her people. When they voice concern, she schedules meetings or speakers and helps in any way she can. The female members wanted to learn about menopause, so Rev. Grinters coordinated a session on how to navigate menopause. Karen Reed, M.D., obstetrician and gynecologist with Norton OB/GYN Associates, spoke to the congregation about women’s health issues. Rev. Grinters made sure that men attended too “because they need to see what the women are going through.”

Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry and tended to the spiritual needs of the whole person.

Not only is Rev. Grinters an associate minister, board member and health minister; she also is a “mom, a grandmother and a great-grandmother.”

When asked what she does to take care of herself, she humbly responded, “I meditate, pray and walk every day. I just want the message of Jesus Christ to be carried out.”

“Rev. Grinters has a passion for helping others and is very committed to this work,” Pastor King said. “We love her at St. John’s Memorial Church.”
Pause slides:

View video clip

Available at:

http://www.kycouncilofchurches.org/health-ministries/
Electronic Advocacy Activities

- Outcome: Expanded health advocacy activities through electronic communication
  - Increased *Capwiz* subscribers by 20%
  - Online activism doubled; Advocacy message-sending tripled

- Lesson: Members of faith communities can become informed advocates of public health & healthy public policies
Build advocacy in small steps

- Outcome:

- Lessons learned:
  - Begin theologically
  - Work with local church leadership (clergy, health ministers, FCNs) as partners
  - Help members of local congregations feel confident about telling their stories to policymakers
CDS Principles Used in Faith-Based Advocacy

EVALUATION: GOOD PRACTICE?
CDS Principle of Good Practice:

Promote active & representative participation toward enabling all members to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives.

- Members of local communities who had not previously had a “voice” in policy formation became involved in healthy public policy advocacy and decision-making
Members of local faith communities engaged in

- Community education about policies affecting health care access
- Researching & developing issues briefs
CDS Principles of Good Practice:
Incorporate diverse interests & cultures of community in the community development process...

- Members of congregation
  - addressing issues of local concern or interest
  - developing culturally relevant educational materials

- (... and disengage from support of any effort that is likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged members of a community)
Existing leaders in the faith community are developing leadership skills in the health policy advocacy arena.

New leaders are emerging.

Knowledge and skills related to advocacy and policy formation are being developed in previously disenfranchised communities.

CDS Principles of Good Practice:

Work actively to enhance the leadership capacity of community members, leaders, and groups within the community.
CDS Principles of Good Practice:

Be open to using the full range of action strategies to work toward the long-term sustainability and well being of the community.

- Multiple strategies are being explored in an asset-based approach to sustainable community health development
Next Steps

RECOMMENDATIONS
Public health has a history of using faith communities as a venue for
distributing health messages,
supporting public health programs, and
serving as sites for public health research and education.

Addressing inequities in wellbeing is a theological tenet of many faith communities.

Recognizing the faith community as an equal partner in promoting "healthy public policy" would strengthen the public health sector's advocacy role.
1. Public health and other community professionals: Consider partnering with faith communities at state, regional, & local levels in public health advocacy efforts.

2. Local health departments: Recognize clergy, FCNs, and faith communities as potential leaders & partners in health policy advocacy and efforts to improve human well-being.
Partner with faith communities in community advocacy efforts

Incorporate faith communities as community development partners
Next Steps
Policy Development: Where are we going?
Do Justice Together

- Advocacy for those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged
  - At the individual level
  - At the system level

- Policy Formation
  - Issues identification
  - Issues analysis

- Speaking Truth to Power
  - Formal leadership
  - Social power
Challenges

- Expanding perception of health from a medical focus to a community development focus
- Expanding faith community perception of health as a community development issue
- Definitions & focus of advocacy
- Maintain non-partisan advocacy
Synergy of effort

Missional church growth – reaching outward

Improving the health of vulnerable & disadvantaged/disenfranchised populations
Your thoughts?
Go forth!
Do justice!
And may God be with you each step of the way!