



Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) is a national health disparities program administered by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since September 2013, Public Health Advocates' (PHAdvocates) REACH project, **Within Our REACH**, has been working with community partners to reduce disparities by promoting healthy eating and physical activity for the approximately 36,000 African Americans living in Stockton, California. Serving San Joaquin County's largest city using a community based, participatory approach, we have increased access to healthy foods and water in churches, organizations, and neighborhoods. Simultaneously, PHAdvocates has convened community leaders representing targeted census tracts to encourage the City of Stockton to include substantive health policies in its General Plan Update.

African-American Churches. PHAdvocates has helped 10 African American churches develop organizational policies to increase access to physical activity and nutritious foods and beverages: water has been exchanged for sugary drinks at church functions; churches have incorporated physical activity breaks into educational sessions, bible study, and conferences; and faith leaders regularly promote healthy foods and beverages from the pulpit. Reaching more than 5,500 church members, we have seen substantial behavior changes and culture shifts:

- Congregants drinking *water every day* increased from 86% to 96%.
- Congregants drinking *soda* decreased from 56% to 47%.
- Congregants eating *fruit* daily increased from 41% to 58%.
- Congregants eating *green salad* daily increased from 13% to 24%.

Owing to these shifts, congregants readily describe how **Within Our REACH** has helped them live healthier lives. Our multidisciplinary approach—including training and education, awareness campaigns, and hands-on resources—has provided our church partners with tools to sustain their work beyond the project. REACH partners are eager to share their knowledge and resources to the broader Stockton community.

Stockton General Plan. To cement PHAdvocates' work increasing access to healthy foods, beverages, and physical activity for Stockton's African American residents, we convened community leaders representing targeted census tracts to advocate for the inclusion of substantive health policies in the city's 2040 General Plan Update. We trained almost 50 residents to participate in the update process, and they attended city council and planning commission meetings and workshops facilitated by the city's consultant, Placeworks, to make their case. Because of these leaders' involvement, the city has invited PHAdvocates to submit health policy recommendations for the General Plan. We are confident that the Plan update will include our recommendations reflecting the Stockton African American's needs and desire to raise healthy families.