

# Promoting Physical Activity in Churches

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# Topics

- Why faith-based organizations (churches)
- My experiences
- Challenges
- Opportunities

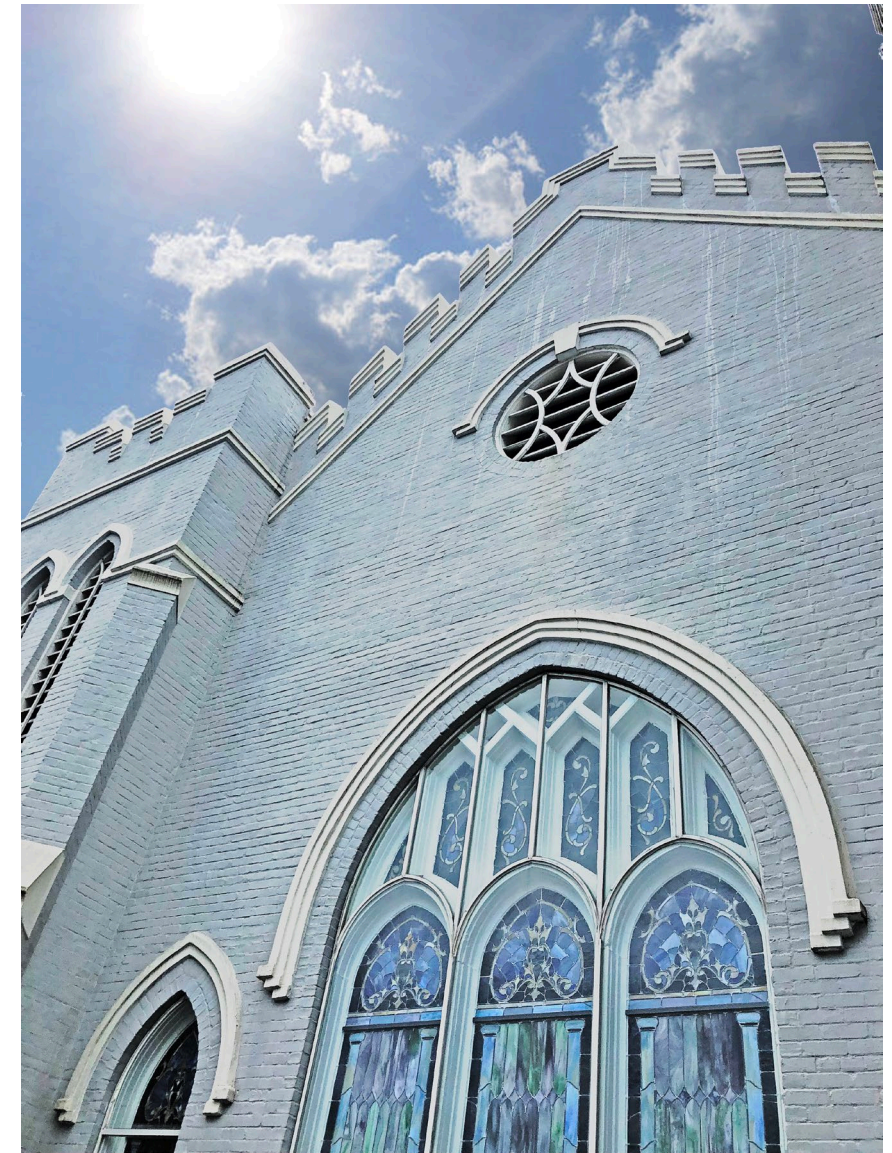


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# Why Churches?

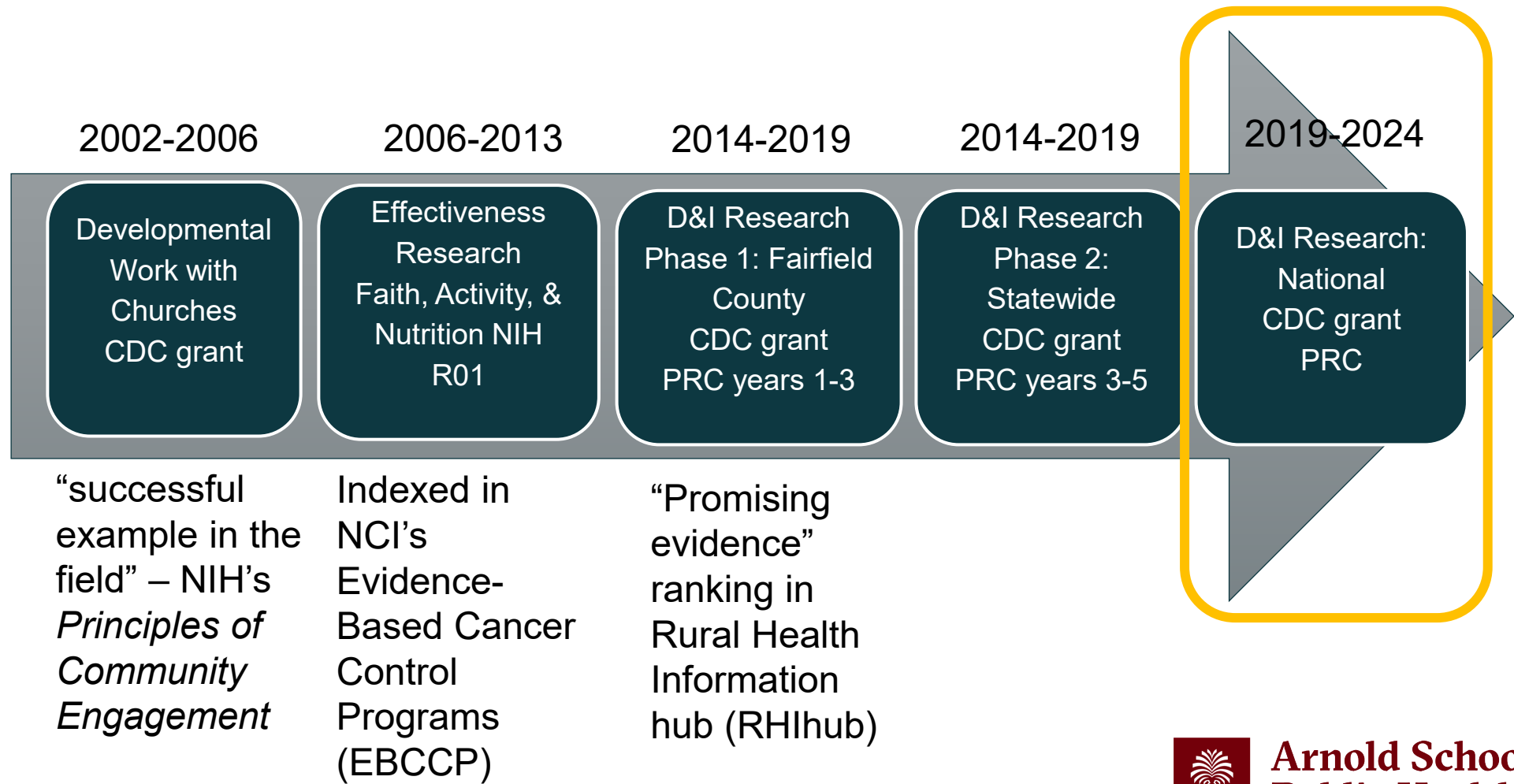
- Reach people in familiar settings
- Draw on community assets
- Have great reach (Pew surveys)
  - 65% of American adults identify as Christian
  - 62% of Christians attend services at least 1-2/mo
  - Subgroups: African Americans, older adults, rural, etc.
- Have physical spaces – indoor & outdoor
- Churches are organizations
  - Guidelines & policies
  - Established modes of communication
  - Have norms & cultures
- (Many) have a health mission or interest



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# My Experiences Working With Churches



# FAN Targets Church Policies, Systems, & Environments (PSEs)

- Evidence-based program
- Trains & supports churches to:
  - increase opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating,
  - share health messages,
  - engage church leaders in FAN goals and support their health, and
  - set guidelines for physical activity and healthy eating.



\*Based on Cohen et al.'s structural model of health behavior



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# How FAN Targets Each Structural Factor

Structural Factor	FAN term	Physical activity example	Healthy eating example
Availability / accessibility of products	Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate movement into worship</li> <li>Offer PA programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low sodium foods</li> </ul>
Physical structures (focus on physical characteristics of products)	(fun & relevant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tie importance of PA to scripture</li> <li>Choose activities appropriate &amp; of interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tie importance of HE to scripture</li> <li>Make sure healthy foods taste good (spices, etc)</li> </ul>
Social structures and policies	Guidelines & Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every meeting &gt; 40 minutes will include active break</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anytime food is served, fruits and vegetables will be included</li> </ul>
Media and cultural messages	Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share messages about PA in common church channels (e.g., bulletin board, emails, social media, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share messages about HE in common church channels (e.g., bulletin board, emails, etc)</li> </ul>
Media and cultural messages	Pastor Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pastor wears pedometers &amp; shares #s with congregation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pastor shares messages / preaches about health</li> </ul>

# FAN National Implementation Study

- Extensive (!! ) process to create the online lessons (Wilcox et al., 2023, Translational Behavioral Medicine)
  - Finding design team
  - Modifying content
  - Interactive elements: church video & audio segments; active breaks; feedback
  - Voice narration
- Enrolled 107 churches; evaluation ongoing
  - 23 states
  - 19 denominations
  - 73% African American



## Be a FAN for Your Church's Health

Now is the time to focus on your congregation's health!

COVID-19 has underscored the importance of health, and churches are looking for ways to address members' well-being and self-care.

Faith, Activity, and Nutrition (FAN) is an established, proven, and effective program developed at the University of South Carolina. Over 300 churches have been trained in FAN to help their congregations become stronger in health!

The FAN Online Training is FREE\* and includes 8 engaging lessons and resources to support members in making healthy choices.

**MAKE 2022 YOUR YEAR FOR HEALTH!**

“Physical activity is so important for our mental and emotional health right now.” – FAN Program Graduate

Sign up for FAN Today!  
Visit [prevention.sph.sc.edu/projects/fantraining.htm](http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/projects/fantraining.htm) to learn more.

**F** Faith  
**A** Activity  
**N** Nutrition

*“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”  
III John 1:2 (NKJV)*

\*FAN is offered through a research study at the University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center. Participation is open to churches in the US.

**CONTACT US**  
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📞 877-971-5259

# Example of Pastor Support





# FAN Outcomes

- Medium to large improvements in church practices & policies
- Small but significant changes in member behaviors
- Changes studied & observed 24 months after training
  - Sustainability



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# Challenges and Opportunities

## Challenges

- Getting in the door - making the connection
- Church vs. grant timelines and (busy!) calendars
- “Pull” to programs by church
- Rely on (the right) committed champions to get things started
- Evaluation

## Opportunities

- Churches are everywhere
- Opportunity for deep tailoring
- Way to partner with local health coalitions & health departments
- Opportunity to make lasting cultural and organizational change



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**Thank you!**



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