

Title: A Partnership to Promote Physical Activity and Healthy Eating (Focus Group with AME church cooks)

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The intent of this study is to determine the ideas, beliefs, and attitudes of cooks in the AME churches in the Charleston and Georgetown areas in order to develop a teaching program that will promote healthy eating and lifestyle changes in the churches and the community. This study is the first step in the implementation of a program that will alter the way that AME churches in South Carolina prepare their foods to promote healthy eating for church members and their communities. The procedures used to collect data pertaining to the study participants' personal beliefs and ideas regarding food and its preparation in this initial step were focus groups and surveys. Each focus group was approximately 120 minutes and contained a maximum of 12 participants. A leader will ask questions throughout the session about meal planning, preparation and service in the church. The session will be recorded on paper and on audiotape in order to ensure that the interpretation of the results are accurate. The surveys will take approximately 30 minutes and will discuss age, education and questions concerning food habits, cooking experience, and beliefs about food choices. All participation in this study will be anonymous to ensure minimal risk to participants. The focus group data has been reviewed. Some results show that food is served in AME churches at high frequencies covering birthdays, funerals, meetings, anniversaries, teas, funerals, weddings, meetings, church school, picnics, breakfasts, bible studies, youth organizations, etc. The results from the surveys are in the process of being analyzed. Based on the results found in this preliminary study, it is apparent that there is a need for a program that will educate the cooks, members, and communities of these AME churches about healthy ways to prepare food in order to promote health.