

REACH U.S.

Vernon J. Harris East End Community Health Center

Richmond, Virginia

A REACH Action Community (AC)

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REACHU.S.

Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health

Across the U.S. (REACH U.S.) is a national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) program aimed at eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities. It utilizes community-based approaches to reduce the burden of chronic illness in specific at-risk populations. There are 22 **REACH Action Communities** using practice-based and evidence-based programs. These programs look at cultural and environmental influences related to health disparities and their underlying causes. They develop, evaluate, and share their culturally specific and relevant strategies and best practices.

ISSUE

The REACH U.S. program at the Vernon J. Harris East End Community Health Center is called *DART – Diabetes Action Resources and Training*. The overall goal of the program is to support African American adults with diabetes living in underserved neighborhoods by providing assistance with the day-to-day self-management of their disease. DART does not replace formal diabetes education, but provides a supportive addition to the education process through peer-to-peer education.

ACTIVITIES

- Provides five peer educator intervention sessions with each program participant. These sessions are developed to change behaviors associated with diabetes including nutrition, physical activities, and self-management.
- Provides each DART program graduate with a starter planter of herbs or vegetables to grow at home.

- Works with residents in five developmental housing complexes in the East End to pursue policy changes allowing them to grow their own garden on the grounds of their housing complex.
- Conducts demonstrations on how to prepare healthy food that is familiar in the African American community.
- Trains DART program graduates to serve as peer educators.
- Continues to provide nutrition and exercise education for DART program participants, as well as support and encouragement to help them improve the self-management of their diabetes.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Since October 2008, successfully collected pre- and post-baseline data on all participants with diabetes.
- Built and maintained a greenhouse on the grounds of the Vernon J. Harris Medical Center.
- Supported participants to work with local convenience stores to improve the availability of healthy foods sold there, such as more fresh vegetables and fruit, reduced salt in prepared food, etc.
- Helped participants improve shopping habits, such as shopping the outer aisles of grocery stores where fresh fruits and vegetables are displayed.
- Helped participants achieve demonstrated results in decreasing their A1C levels and increasing their weight loss.

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