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| **Engaging Faith Communities in Ending the AIDS Epidemic Initiative in NYS** |
| **Conference sub-theme addressed**Inclusive Habitats**Relevant experience or practice**Early in the epidemic, the New York State (NYS) Department of Health (DOH), AIDS Institute (AI), recognized the importance of a cross sector approach to HIV prevention and treatment, including ensuring representation from faith communities. In 2001, the AI launched the Faith Communities Project (FCP), which was developed in recognition of the significant role faith communities play in HIV/AIDS prevention and support/care efforts. NYSDOH is aware and sensitive to the fact that some people view religiousinstitutions, beliefs, and individuals’ faith-inspired actions, as both stigmatizing, as well as affirming and transformative, and has utilized various strategies to engage faith communities in its HIV prevention and health care efforts. In 2014, when NYS’ Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a three-point plan to “bend the curve” and decrease new HIV infections in NYS, faith leaders were invited to be active stakeholders in developing the “Blueprint” to ETE in New York State by the end of 2020.Strategies to engage faith communities in the ETE initiative have included: regional faith forums, focus groups with faith leaders, participant surveys, faith-based HIV workshops with on-site testing, partnerships with seminary and divinity schools, training clergy and chaplains in various institutions, including hospitals and correctional facilities.**Implications for health promotion**Recognizing that some people living with and/or at risk for HIV or other health issues value their relationship with faith-based communities and faith leaders, a multi-sectoral approach to promote and respond to public health issues, concerns and emergencies, must include faith-based institutions. Increased access to marginalized communities to ensure equal access to health promotion programs and services **Implications for sustainable development**Developing and sustaining partnerships ensures health promotion programs and initiatives are successfully implemented in faith-based communities/institutions, as they have access to a cadre of people who might not utilize traditional health systems. As such, they can be important stakeholders to support and advocate for health promotion policies and legislation designed to improve the health of communities disproportionately impacted by chronic diseases and negative health outcomes.  |