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Detroit Urban Research Center (Detroit URC) Overview

The Detroit URC is an interdisciplinary, community-based participatory research (CBPR) partnership that equitably engages community-based organizations, health service institutions and academia to create research, programs and policies to improve health equity in Detroit (see goals listed below). Based on our mission, for more than 20 years the Detroit URC and affiliated partnerships, building upon community resources and strengths, have enhanced understanding of the relationship between the social and physical environmental determinants of health, and translated the knowledge gained into public health interventions and policies that have resulted in improved health status and reduced health risk factors.

CBPR projects have focused on a number of health issues and their determinants, including, asthma, heart disease, diabetes, air pollution, violence, access to health insurance, fresh food, and physical activity. The work of the Detroit URC and affiliated partnerships has made substantial contributions in a number of key areas, including: interdisciplinary and action-oriented research; diversity, equity and inclusion; prevention and alleviation of poverty; and community engagement and dissemination – all with a focus on, and in partnership with, community and health practice entities in Detroit.

The Detroit URC aims to:

- **Foster and sustain collaborative research partnerships** between academic institutions and Detroit-based organizations focused on promoting health equity.
- **Enhance capacity of community, health practice and academic entities to engage as equitable partners in research** that meets the needs of the communities involved.
- **Strengthen the capacity of academic, community and health practice entities to engage in policy advocacy processes.**
- **Translate research findings to advance policy formulation, dissemination and education** at all levels of government and within organizations, agencies and systems.

[See Information about Programs & Resources on the Next Page](#)

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Detroit URC Programs & Resources

The Community-Academic Research Network (“the Network”)

The Network includes community-based organizations, health practice agencies and academic researchers interested in conducting and disseminating collaborative research in Detroit. It facilitates information sharing and expands communications about research interests and opportunities through an online database. Network members have a profile on the Detroit URC website. They also receive regular updates about funding opportunities, research-related tools, and mentoring and technical assistance aimed at building capacity to conduct collaborative research.



Collaborative Research Support

The Detroit URC facilitates collaborative research through two grant funding programs. First, in collaboration with the Michigan Institute for Clinical and Health Research, the Detroit URC administers a Small Planning Grant program to help foster new community-academic research partnerships and collaborative health research efforts in Detroit. The second program, offered in partnership with University of Michigan (U-M) Poverty Solutions, helps to support community-academic teams to explore strategies to prevent and alleviate poverty in Michigan. In both cases, the Detroit URC provides grant recipients with valuable capacity building support and mentoring.

Capacity Building for Policy Advocacy

The Detroit URC provides training workshops, technical assistance, and ongoing support to adult and youth community groups to enhance the capacity of Detroit residents to conduct effective policy advocacy efforts. The Detroit URC trainings aim to build and support policy campaigns that address issues identified by the communities involved and establish linkages with and mobilize groups, organizations, community members and policy makers to work in partnership to achieve policy change. Issues that have been addressed through these policy efforts include: neighborhood blight, land use, academic achievement and safety in and around schools.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Capacity Building

The Detroit URC develops and conducts interactive CBPR workshops aimed at building capacity within communities and institutions (e.g., academic, health departments, health systems, community-based organizations).

The Center also provides technical assistance to new and emerging CBPR partnerships related to developing, maintaining, and sustaining partnerships. Every year, five university researchers and five Detroit-based partners co-teach a week-long summer short course entitled, “Methods in Community- Based Participatory Research for Health” at the University of Michigan.

CBPR Partnership Academy

Now in its second year, the CBPR Partnership Academy is a year-long program designed to enhance participants’ knowledge and skills CBPR, so they may apply this collaborative research approach to address racial and ethnic inequities in health in their communities.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Academy includes a week-long intensive course, taught in Ann Arbor in July by both U-M academic researchers and Detroit community partners; one year of structured learning opportunities; and access to ongoing networking and mentorship. Throughout the year, the newly formed partnerships work together to strengthen their partnerships and develop and implement a joint CBPR project focused on improving the health and well-being of the communities involved.



If you have any questions, please contact Detroit URC Project Manager Carol Gray at ccbgray@umich.edu or (734) 763-0412.