Institute of Environmental Medicine
Community Outreach Engagement and Education

What is Community Engagement?

We all talk about it, but what does it really mean to “engage” a community? Community engagement is a type of public participation that involves people in problem-solving and decision-making processes. It is a multilayer, fluid process.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines it as “the process of working collaboratively with groups of people who are affiliated by geographic proximity, special interests or similar situations with respect to issues affecting their well-being”.

It is believed that by engaging the community, the public has a right to participate. The public health community believes by working together, problems will be accurately identified and effective solutions developed. Conflict will also be minimized if the community has the opportunity to “buy into” the process.

Community Engagement & Garfield, N.J.

- Community Engagement, as we have developed with the city of Garfield (NJ), creates and builds trust. Inviting leadership from the community for bi-directional discussions, we demonstrate that their participation is valued and their views seriously considered.

- Community Engagement connects people and resources. By connecting residents, engagement efforts improve connections between individuals, community businesses, churches, and community associations. In doing so, the Department of Environmental Medicine has reached out to Garfield’s local churches, YMCA, Senior Citizens Center, Department of Public Health, Garfield Parks and Recreation along with others to make this “connection”.

- Community Engagement strives to talk and share ideas and seeks to find common ground. The engagement mechanism encourages bottom-up rather than top-down and creates responsibility rather than dictates.

In this regard, a Town Hall meeting with Garfield community leaders and residents will take place on October 30 in a local church to discuss community needs and concerns with the NYU Department of Environmental Medicine faculty.

NYU COEC Director: Judith T. Zelikoff, Ph.D;
Judith.Zelikoff@nyumc.org

COEC Associate & Assistant Research Scientist: Shannon Doherty-Lyons;
Shannon.Doherty@nyumc.org

COEC Associate & Assistant Research Scientist: Maureen P. Sisco;
maureen.sisco@nyumc.org