

How Can I Learn More?

TALK to people who have worked with promotora programs about their experiences & lessons-learned.

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JOIN the Statewide Promotoras and Community Health Workers Network, Vision y Compromiso. Contact Melinda Cordero at 626-864-6117 or visit www.visionycompromiso.org.

READ about the promotora model and successful projects. We suggest you visit:

The Texas Department of State Health Services Community Health Worker Research Materials Archive at:
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/library/chw-archive.shtm>

The Migrant Health Promotion site at
http://migranthealth.org/our_programs/who_are_promotora.php



Promotoras de Salud y Vacunas

A Promising Model for Promoting Immunizations in our Hispanic/Latino Communities

Produced by the California Coalition for Childhood
Immunization Health Disparities Committee

To learn more about the Committee, visit
www.immunizeca.org.

Introduction

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. When carried out by and with people within their community, it enables individuals, groups, organizations and communities to make better health decisions.

To address existing and emerging threats to health, including health disparities, new health promotion models are needed. Health promotion models like Promotoras de Salud offer an opportunity to unlock the potential for health promotion inherent in communities and families.

What are Promotoras de Salud?

Promotoras de Salud are lay health workers, health promoters, or community health workers who conduct health education, counseling, and outreach in Hispanic communities. They play a pivotal role because of their many functions as community advocates, peer educators, and organizers.

Promotoras offer a promising culturally-appropriate approach to promoting healthy behaviors related to a variety of conditions including: pediatric and adult immunizations, diabetes, HIV, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. As members of the community they serve, the community identifies with them and is more receptive to their message.

Have Promotora de Salud programs been funded in California?

YES. A number of California organizations have received funding from various sources to implement and evaluate community health promotion projects including Promotora de Salud projects. Local, statewide, and federal initiatives, foundations, and endowments, especially those with funding dedicated to reducing ethnic disparities, may be resources for obtaining funding for a promotora project.

In California, promotora programs have been funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, California Department of Health Services Immunization Branch, First 5 LA, the Tri-Counties Cancer Detection Partnership and The California Endowment.

The Promotora Model is based on Paulo Freire's concept of empowerment: having people and communities take control of their own health promotion and disease prevention.

Why Consider a Promotora de Salud program?

Promotoras de Salud

- Make health information universally accessible to individuals & families in the communities where they live and work.
- Provide culturally relevant information that is appropriate to the language, cultural values, & norms of targeted communities.
- Reach communities that organized health services often cannot to:
 - Effectively promote healthy behaviors for a range of health conditions, including immunizations
 - Link families to community resources
 - Encourage full participation of community members in their health
- Have significant roles in providing health services and enhancing the community's overall health and well-being.
- Can improve our understanding of the underlying challenges to and opportunities for improving health in ethnic communities.
- Are proven to be effective in promoting healthy behaviors for a range of health conditions including immunizations.

A Snapshot of Promotora de Salud programs in California reveals that they can improve immunization rates!

MIHELP Program

MIHELP provides Ventura County's Mixtec Native American community with culturally-competent, outreach, health education, and referrals to preventive health services. Funded by The California Endowment & the Tri-Counties Cancer Detection Partnership, the program's Promotoras engage the community in education on immunizations, prenatal care, & breast & cervical health. Sessions are taught in Mixteco, with Spanish language materials, since Mixteco is an oral language.

MIHELP has provided education to 200 people; nearly half were referred to healthcare providers for immunizations. The program can share specialized strategies for training indigenous promotoras.

Rescatando Salud (Health Rescue Project)

In 1997, the Rescatando Salud Project began training immigrant women as Promotoras to improve vaccination coverage in South Central L.A. The Promotoras conducted a variety of health promotion activities, including:

home visits outreach/education
resource mobilization case-management

This project was funded under a grant from the California Department of Health Services Immunization Branch and received CDC funding through a partnership with the Immunize LA Kids Coalition.

Between 1997 and 2002, immunization coverage levels (4:3:1:3:3) increased 15% & 2002 coverage levels were 21% higher for households that received Promotora follow-up than households that received no services.

Por la Vida Immunization Project

In 1995, the County of San Diego Department of Health Services-Community Disease Control Section and the San Diego State University Foundation established the "Por la Vida Project". The project trained African American and Latina Promotoras over a 3-month period to assess and promote immunization through the delivery of educational flyers and messages.

Although the program was short-term, Por la Vida brings qualitative lessons about effective approaches to conducting lay health outreach. For instance, they identified several simple strategies for increasing Promotora credibility and improving visibility.

"Vacunas Para Los Niños" Program

This project of Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center, Inc., the Southern Alameda County Head Start, and several WIC sites used California DHS funding to conduct bilingual interventions to increase community demand for immunizations. Between 2002 & 2005, the project aimed to:

- Integrate immunization assessments and follow-up with other child health services
- Empower participants & community members to become health promoters & participate in community & advocacy activities supporting immunizations
- Achieve an 80% up-to-date rate for shots recommended by age two for children served by partnering agencies.

The program's 45 Promotoras reached almost 5000 parents of high-risk children each year. The program surpassed its 80% UTD goal for two year olds tracked in the immunization registry and WIC participants.