

The Link Between Community & Health

by: Patricia Pullen

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CA4Health, the Public Health Institute's Community Transformation Grant, works with counties in California with populations less than 500,000.

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SUMMARY

Tulare County's effort to help individuals manage chronic disease and improve access to community resources by training and supporting community health workers has created strong clinical-community linkages. CHWs have attended trainings on core competencies and program specific topics. Partnerships were established with organizations that include three medical clinics and two mental health clinics. These connections have led to the implementation of patient referral procedures to encourage patients with chronic disease to attend workshops.

CHALLENGE

According to County Health Rankings, Tulare ranks last out of 57 counties in California in health factors and 47 out of 57 in health outcomes. These standings come from higher rates of smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, uninsured, and preventable hospital stays, and exacerbated by the fact that Tulare has more than 2 times the number of residents per primary care provider than the state

average, creating access to care issues (2,364:1, compared to the state ratios of 1,051:1). This environment that has allowed chronic diseases to rise to the top as the county's major causes of death.

"My biggest satisfaction in delivering these workshops is when participants come in and tell me they've made changes thanks to the information I gave them and they've been able to lose weight...I can see on their faces how happy they are."

- Candy Silva, Tomando Control de su Salud Facilitator

Success Stories

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dchsuccessstories/>

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SOLUTION

In order to address the high rates of chronic disease, Tulare County has worked to promote the value of the Community Health Workers as links between clinical care and community resources. As a way of developing this link, 50 CHWs were certified to facilitate the Stanford Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDMSP) workshops. With the support of Public Health Department partners, 21 clinics and community-based locations across Tulare County hosted workshops, including senior centers, apartment complexes, family resource centers, health clubs, mobile home parks, churches, and schools.

SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Tulare County and clinical partners will continue to carry out long-term chronic disease self-management workshops. Three clinics have committed their paid staff to becoming certified CDSMP and Tomando Facilitators and plan to continue delivering workshops in Pixley, Tipton and Visalia. Additionally, our partnership with the county's Mental Health Department will provide 6 workshops for mental health consumers in 2014-15, which will include provider referrals to workshops, and will be funded under the Mental Health Services Act. Also, we will hold a workshop at Owens Valley Career Development Center, an organization serving the Native American population, with plans to contract with our county for additional workshops.

RESULTS

Fifty community health workers, 21 in CDSMP and 29 in Tomando Control de su Salud, delivered 28 workshops, connecting 157 English and Spanish speaking residents to a behavior changing curriculum, taught in a culturally competent way. Support for Community Health Workers is provided through ongoing communication that includes meetings, letters and class visits. After completing workshops, participants reported that they made significant behavior changes leading to improved health: 64% will watch portion/serving size, 55% will read food labels, 49% will reduce salt in diet, and 47% will be more physically active. Additionally, our partnership with the county mental health department resulted in the implementation of an 8-week exercise class for CDSMP graduates.