



ST. EDWARD MEDICAL CENTER Fort Smith, AR

August, 2004

Executive Summary:

St. Edward Medical Center provides a clinic in the area's most economically disadvantaged neighborhood. Large portions of the clinic's visitors are uninsured and underinsured Hispanic patients, and the clinic staff observed a higher proportion of Hispanic patients with diabetes compared to the general population. As a result, the organization applied for and received a grant to offer a new program at the clinic targeting the health care needs of the area's Hispanic population. Using the grant, St. Edward Medical Center has hired a bilingual clinical staff member to assist the clinic's mid-level provider, established a diabetic education and screening program in Spanish, and is working with local organizations to promote the new program. The clinic will not turn away anyone in need of health care services, offering care on a free or sliding scale basis. In addition to implementing this new program, St. Edward Medical Center strives to offer culturally competent care by providing each clinical department with cultural information, subscribing to the AT&T translation service, and translating documentation into the common languages spoken in the community.

Organization Size: 343 beds

Program/Initiative Description:

Health Care Targeting the Community's Uninsured and Underinsured Hispanic Population: St. Edward Medical Center funds free or sliding-scale health care services to uninsured and underinsured patients. The clinic is located near the area's most economically disadvantaged area, where a large portion of Hispanic patients are either uninsured or underinsured. In addition to providing free or sliding scale health care services, the clinic recently received a grant to provide a program that will offer diabetic education courses in Spanish for Hispanic community members. The courses will provide general diabetes information as well as information about how to care for the disease, medications required, the importance of diet and potential complicating factors for diabetic patients. The educational program will also provide diabetic screening to participants, as well as necessary supplies and follow-up care.

The clinic currently has a Certified Physician's Assistant (PA), and recently hired an additional bilingual clinical staff member who will work with this program under the Physician's Assistant. In addition to hiring the necessary staff, grant funding will be used for translating written materials and educational programs. The hospital is collaborating with other entities in the city to ensure community members are aware of the new program and understand the benefits available.

In addition its new program, St. Edward Medical Center provides each clinical area with a copy of the book *Culture in Nursing Care*. The book addresses a wide variety of nationalities and outlines their cultural identify and basic beliefs about life, dietary issues, health issues and religious beliefs. The organization also translates many of its documents into Spanish, and uses the AT&T language line primarily for Spanish, Vietnamese and Laotian patients. All documentation about patient rights and responsibilities are available in English, Spanish, Laotian and Vietnamese.

Establishment of Program/Initiative: Application for the grant began in 2003; the program will begin in May 2004.

Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Program/Initiative Was Designed to Address

- Growing number of Hispanics in this community, the majority of whom are uninsured or underinsured
- The hospital's clinic serving a severely economically disadvantaged area observed a greater proportion of Hispanic patients diagnosed with diabetes

Major Objectives: Address the health care needs of the growing uninsured Hispanic population, with an emphasis on diabetes education

Significant Results: The program is still in the implementation phase

External Partners in the Program/Initiative: Mercy Caritas, a funding program of the Sisters of Mercy Health System; community collaboration with the Fort Smith Cultural Center and the Fort Smith Public School System.

Limitations or Problems Encountered:

- It was difficult to find a clinical employee who was also bilingual; finding and employing clinicians of different cultures is a constant struggle for St. Edward Medical Center
- Finding the right individual took longer than the organization had originally anticipated, which delayed development of the program

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: The Mercy Caritas grant provides \$33,000 for start-up costs for the program which is expected to have expenses of \$50-70,000 per year.

St. Edward Mercy Medical Center and the clinic will provide, at no cost, lab testing, clinical supervision, space and incidental supplies.

Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program:

When applying for a grant, it is important to be very clear about the program's need, including demonstrating specific numbers of increasing diversity or diseases and showing that the proposed service is not already available in the

community. In addition, the grant application must state specifically how the funding will be used, including personnel, equipment, space and educational materials. It is helpful to state how the program will be marketed and to be open to collaborating with others, if necessary.

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