

Executive Summary:

Little Company of Mary operates two hospitals located in the South Bay area of Los Angeles. Although the Samoan population in the area is small, it requires primary health care services and health education. In response to this need, Little Company of Mary created a diabetes outreach program targeting the Samoan population. Little Company of Mary began by sending a Samoan doctor to local churches to give presentations about diabetes. Each church service was followed with free blood sugar screenings. Approximately 30 percent of the tested individuals either had impaired glucose tolerance or were diabetic. In addition, approximately 60 percent of the known diabetics tested had blood sugar levels that were out of control.

The program refers these at-risk and diabetic patients to a physician, including four free visits over a six-month period as well as a referral to a diabetic education program. The eight-week program, taught in Samoan, addresses issues surrounding management and prevention of diabetes. The continued success of this Samoan outreach program has recently allowed Little Company of Mary to receive funding from its parent company, Providence Health System, to implement a similar program in the Latino community.

Organization Size: Little Company of Mary San Pedro Hospital: 259 beds; Little Company of Mary Hospital in Torrance: 317 beds

Program/Initiative Description:

Samoan Diabetes Outreach: Little Company of Mary recently established a diabetic screening and education program targeting the Samoan population in South Bay area of Los Angeles. The program was created with funding from LA Care to identify health needs specific to the Samoan populations and implement a series of diabetes classes for 100 adults. Little Company of Mary began by working with a Samoan doctor and local Samoan churches. The doctor and a nurse gave presentations during or after church services, which were followed by free blood sugar tests. The tests revealed that about 30 percent of the tested population had either impaired glucose tolerance or a positive diabetes test result. In addition, about 60 percent of the known diabetic patients had blood sugar levels that were out of control.

The organization began identifying new and existing uninsured diabetics, who were referred to the Samoan physician for a medical assessment. The protocol includes four free visits over six months as well as a referral to the hospital's diabetic education program. The education program includes a series of seven

two-hour classes conducted in Samoan, focusing on managing diabetes as well as managing the disease through nutrition, exercise, and stress management. The education program's staff is entirely made up of Samoans, many of whom were hired from the community and trained by the hospital. This has provided the Samoan community with positive role models and has also integrated the hospital and its diabetic screening and education programs into the Los Angeles Samoan community in and around Carson, Long Beach, and Compton, California.

The success of this diabetes outreach program in the Samoan community has resulted in Little Company of Mary receiving additional funds from the Providence Health System corporate office to expand the program to the Latino population as well. Like the Samoan program, the hospital will strive to reach the Latino community by creating a culturally appropriate program using trained members of the Latino community.

Establishment of Program/Initiative: September 2002

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

- One-third of the adult population in the South Bay area of Los Angeles is uninsured, and the greatest health care need is for low-cost or free primary care
- Substantial health needs in the local Samoan community

Major Objectives

- Increase awareness of diabetes in the Samoan community through church presentations
- Screen at least 1,800 Samoan adults, including a medical follow-up assessment if necessary
- Implement a seven-session sequence of diabetes classes for 100 Samoan adults

Significant Results: People who attend four or more classes have a significantly improved blood sugar level

External Partners in the Program/Initiative

- Local Samoan ministers
- LA Care, a publicly organized HMO that primarily covers MediCal enrollees

Limitations or Problems Encountered

- Cultural differences in communication and project management approaches
- Motivating Samoan community members to consistently attend class and be responsible for their own health

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: The original grant was for \$300,000 over two years.

Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program: It is important to build links to your local community, and have someone that is trusted or credible in the community to help accomplish your goals and objectives.

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