

Executive Summary:

St. Mary's Hospital serves a largely immigrant population. To better serve their health care needs, the hospital asked community residents "what more can St. Mary's do for you?" The chief response was that the immigrant community needed help learning English, becoming citizens, and becoming healthier. Based on this assessment, the hospital developed the "Caritas Connection" (Caritas is Latin for charity).

The hospital provides free outreach to the community in several languages and, with the help of grants, has been able to participate in the building of three new parish nursing sites in the downtown area, which has a high immigrant population. The hospital provides tutors to teach English in formal and non-formal settings, and anyone interested in obtaining citizenship is encouraged to attend a training class that helps review for the exam.

The hospital has been successful in gaining the trust of the immigrant population to ensure their willingness to attend trainings and outreach programs. In 2001, the hospital was recognized for having registered the most children and families in New Jersey Family Care, a health care program for the uninsured, and, in 2002, the hospital was showcased as a best practice hospital for insuring families in New Jersey Family Care.

Organization Size: 200 beds

Program/Initiative Description:

Caritas Connection: St. Mary's Hospital serves a largely Hispanic immigrant population in its community. To best serve their customers, the hospital conducted a broad community outreach effort to determine what its needs were. Three key areas of need were identified: (1) learning English; (2) becoming citizens; and (3) becoming healthier. The hospital then developed programs based on these identified needs.

The hospital recruited and trained tutors to teach formal and informal English classes. The hospital also developed a "Family Literacy" program in which parents who are learning English can bring children between the ages of five and eight years old to participate with them in their language learning. As these programs became more widely utilized, the hospital discovered that there was a need among some to learn to read and write in Spanish before they could begin to learn English. Because of this need, the hospital initiated a program to teach people to read and write in Spanish.

For those individuals who are interested in becoming citizens of the United States, the hospital offers a 36-hour citizenship training class. Volunteers help people to study for the INS exam, and some of the tutors accompany participants to the exam.

To create a healthier community, the hospital set up free health screenings for blood pressure, glucose, respiratory health, depression, breast cancer, stroke, hypertension, and cholesterol. It also set up health presentations in different languages that are presented in community venues, churches, and schools. These presentations included topics on nutrition, hygiene, asthma, dental care, hypertension, cancer, diabetes, ear and throat, and child safety. The hospital also received a grant from the March of Dimes to provide five-hour prenatal classes in Spanish, English, Arabic, and Polish. In addition, the hospital conducts baby care classes in Spanish and provides brochures that detail the benefits of folic acid.

The hospital received a grant from the Bon Secours Health System that supports a collaborative effort called “Juntos en Salud” or “Together in Health” to finance the establishment of parish nursing sites in the downtown area. Three sites have been opened, and each site has one nurse practitioner and one clinical assistant and all three sites share one nurse that provides follow-up services. This person helps follow up with prescriptions and other health care issues that individuals are unable to afford.

Finally, the hospital is involved in “Project Clothing Children,” which is focused on donating clothes to children in need. Each Wednesday hospital employees bring used children’s clothes for donation. The hospital has averaged over 40,000 articles of donated clothing each year.

Establishment of Program/Initiative: 1993

Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Program/Initiative Was Designed to Address: A high immigrant population with many critical unmet health needs

Major Objectives

- Implement disease-specific case management particularly for people with hypertension and diabetes
- Provide outreach to the chronically ill
- Serve the immigrant populations within the community

Significant Results

- The fear that immigrants feel has been reduced, and they are more willing to attend screenings and classes.
- The level of trust toward the hospital among the immigrant population has improved.
- Prenatal classes have been completed by 450 women; 350 family members completed the class with them.
- Eight thousand folic acid brochures have been distributed throughout the community.
- Twenty-two families with 24 children have completed the family literacy program.
- In 2002, the hospital was showcased as a best practice hospital for insuring families in New Jersey Family Care (a low income health care program).
- In 2001, the hospital received an award for having registered the most children and families in New Jersey Family Care.

External Partners in the Program/Initiative

- Catholic charities
- Department of Education (helps distribute information to the community)
- Churches in the community
- Children's Wear (a store in New Jersey that donates returned items to the hospital and the community)
- New Jersey Kid Care, an insurance program for the uninsured
- Passaic City Department of Social Services (provides information to immigrant populations)
- City health department

Limitations or Problems Encountered: Some in the immigrant community felt fear about seeking care because of concerns that they might be questioned about their immigration status and deported; however, the community now trusts the hospital and has transcended that fear.

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: \$592,000

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

- Listen to the community and respond to their needs
- Seek out grants, it allows you to do so much more than you would normally be able to do
- Trust in divine providence

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