



ST. JOHN'S RIVERSIDE HOSPITAL YONKERS, NY

December 2004

Executive Summary:

St. John's Riverside Hospital, partnering with the Community Planning Council of Yonkers and 35 community organizations, formed the Yonkers Community Health Coalition. Using grant funding from the New York State Department of Health, Office of Minority Health, the Coalition is dedicated to decreasing minority health disparities, with an emphasis on cardiovascular disease. The Coalition uses a grassroots approach to provide educational information about cardiovascular disease and the relationship between obesity and cardiovascular health. Specific programs have included a "Good Health, Better Living" poster campaign, eight-week educational sessions at the YMCA targeting nutrition and exercise lifestyle changes, and one-time community events providing education and materials about cardiovascular disease. The program's initial three-year grant was awarded in 2000, and was recently extended another three years to 2006.

Organization Size: 407 acute beds, 120 skilled nursing beds (8 ventilator beds)

Program/Initiative Description:

The Yonkers Community Health Coalition: Using grant funds from the New York State Department of Health, Office of Minority Health, St. John's Riverside Hospital partnered with several community organizations to address the prevalence of cardiovascular disease in the minority population. The Coalition, comprised of over 30 businesses, government representatives, hospitals, schools, community services, and faith-based organizations in Yonkers, NY, focused specifically on the African Americans and Latinos in the community, the two largest minority groups in the area. The group used a grassroots, asset-based approach to educate the population, using door-to-door sharing of information and partnerships with small local businesses, including nail salons and small grocery stores. The partnerships allowed the Coalition to display its large educational posters with information about cardiovascular disease as well as information about other public health issues including diabetes, tobacco, asthma, and obesity. The poster campaign, entitled "Good Health, Better Living," included a contact phone number for those interested in learning more information. The contact number allowed the group to track the poster campaign's success by measuring the number of responses received.

A series of educational programs was also established to help residents understand the dangers of obesity and the relationship between obesity and heart disease. The program, hosted at the Yonkers YMCA, provides education about weight and obesity issues and the effects of heart disease, as well body mass index and weight measurements, implementation of a physical activity program, and outcomes measurement. The program also focuses on preparing participants for continuing their new lifestyle after the eight-week session ends, incorporating nutrition and cooking recommendations and creating regular exercise programs.

In addition, the Coalition has established a variety of community campaigns to increase awareness of cardiovascular disease prevention, including:

- Creation of a community newsletter, public service announcements in English and Spanish, and a "Passport to Health" contest to be announced to local businesses

- Hosting a “Yonkers Play Day” at local parks where residents may receive educational materials and participate in different physical and nutritional activities, aimed toward adults learning with their children in a family environment
- Developing a community resource guide suggesting free community exercise activities and healthy eating opportunities available in the Yonkers area
- Establishing strong partnerships with local faith-based organizations, developing a group of 25 organizations that meet regularly with a nurse or health representative to identify an action plan to improve the health of their community and congregations

Establishment of Program/Initiative: The first three-year grant was received in 2000, and was recently renewed for another three years, extending until 2006.

Racial or ethnic disparities problem the Initiative was designed to address:

- Significant disparities between the health care received by minority residents and non-minority residents for various reasons, i.e., barriers to access to care as a result of location or language difficulties and lack of understanding on how to utilize the system
- Growing African American and Hispanic populations in the area, with a higher prevalence of disease compared to non-minority groups in the area

Major Objectives: To address the health disparities in the minority populations of Yonkers, NY

Significant Results:

- The YMCA program focused on obesity and its impact on cardiovascular health resulted in measurable weight change and eating habits in the participants. Out of 28 participants, 23 (82 percent) experienced weight loss and/or reduction of body fat with an increase of lean muscle mass.
- Both the eight-week health education sessions and one-time educational outreach programs conducted by the program implemented a pre-test and post-test about perceived notions surrounding eating habits, certain kinds of food, smoking, and the effects of heart disease. One hundred percent of participants demonstrated significantly greater understanding of the issues and their implications.
- The Good Health, Better Living poster campaign tracked the number of phone calls received to determine the success of the campaign. During an 18-month period, over 40 calls were received by the hospitals’ Information Center.
- In 2003, Yonkers Family Day, an annual free event targeted for families with young children, yielded the opportunity to distribute educational materials to over 5,000 Yonkers’ families.

External Partners in the Program/Initiative:

- New York State Department of Health , Office of Minority Health
- Community Planning Council of Yonkers, Inc.
- Local businesses, faith-based organizations, schools, and residents

Limitations or Problems Encountered:

- Finding the resources and funding to support the service organizations and outreach education programs the Coalition would like to offer
- Keeping community residents involved in the Coalition and partnership so that the hospital can look to them for feedback, such as ensuring written educational

materials are culturally and linguistically appropriate and learning the best locations to hold education sessions for easy access to the target population

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: The grant provides \$53,000 per year

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

- Maintaining strong partnership with well-established community-based organizations such as businesses and faith-based organizations allows the program to remain strong in the community and to utilize the community's assets and resources.
- Seeking feedback from community residents helps the group to know if the program is meeting the community's needs and to understand emerging needs.

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