Promotores: Our Community Resources

NCSL Hunger Partnership

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Visión y Compromiso
The Promotoras and Community Health Workers Network

- Established in 2001 by Visión y Compromiso, the Network is now active in 13 regions and includes over 4,000 P/CHWs.

- Network priorities are defined locally and may differ by region.

- Regional Comités are the vehicle for local leadership development.

- RCs organize quarterly forums, trainings, health fairs and family events based on assessment of local needs.
International Origins of the Promotores Model

Source: US/Mexico Border Health Association

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In 17th century Russia, “Lay People” or outreach workers called *feldshers* took a one-year training to learn to care for civilians and people in the military.
In China in the 1960s, farm workers were trained as “barefoot doctors” to provide health care in rural communities. About 20% of these health workers later entered medical school.

Source: US-Mexico Border Health Association
Heightened political activism in the 1960s and 1970s increased the number of Promotores trained by popular organizations and church groups throughout Latin America.
The first formal community health worker programs in the United States were established in 1950-1960 as a strategy to deliver accessible and appropriate health resources to communities not being served by the traditional medical system.
The Health Promotores Model

The Alma Alta Declaration, signed at the World Health Organization (WHO) conference in 1978, called for:

- Local community participation in determining health care priorities.
- Increased emphasis on primary health care and preventative medicine.
- Linkages between medicine, trade, economics, industry, rural politics, and other political and social arenas.
Who are Promotores and Community Health Workers?

Promotores are community members who act as natural helpers and liaisons to their neighbors and local neighborhoods; they may or may not be affiliated with community institutions.

Promotores help increase access to health services (particularly among racial and ethnic minority groups), improve quality of care, reduce health care costs, and contribute to broader social and community development (Witmer et al, 1995). As “in-between people,”

Promotores “draw on their insider status and understanding to act as culture and language brokers between their own community and systems of care (Satterfield et al, 2002; Love et al., 2004, p.418).”
Promotores are Natural “Boundary Spanners”…

“…sought after to provide advice, support, and tangible help.” They offer servicio de corazón (heartfelt service) and culturally relevant prevention education and information to both native-born and immigrant communities.

Source: US-Mexico Border Health Association

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Programs

- Promotor programs flourish throughout California/USA, particularly in metropolitan areas where community based organizations and health providers have nurtured those activities within their organizations.

- While the content of these programs and the actual services provided vary according to the funding, health condition or behavior priority for that region, the core capabilities remain constant.

- Promotores are involved in mental health, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, chronic disease prevention, cancer, nutrition, oral health, anti-hunger, nutrition education and health access.
They may have diverse roles and functions often determined by funding/program requirements.
Promotora

- Community-based
- Informal Assistance
- Volunteer & Part-Time
- Little recognition
- Person-to-person interaction
- Live in community

CHW

- Institutional-based
- Formal Assistance
- Employed Part-/Full-Time
- Formal Recognition
- Authority interaction
- May reside outside community

Source: Community-Workers: Who Are They and What Do They Do? 1996 and VyC focus group data
Promotores.....

As Liaisons, they help:

• Provide fair and impartial information
• Remove cultural and linguistic barriers
• Encourage participation in maintaining health
• Increase access to prevention, services and follow up care
• Provide a wide range of services & integrate prevention

• Naturally connect with and maximize existing social networks
• Increase trustworthiness
• Local workforce development
• Meet the cultural and linguistic needs of limited English speakers
• Provide cost-effective services
• Reinforce cultural values & norms
• Reduce access barriers to agencies, hospitals & pharmacies

Can be active partner in health team/home
Provide integrative support in adherence and disease management
What do Promotores Need from You…?

- Get to know the Promotores in your State.
- Who are they, what communities do they represent?
- What role do they play in their neighborhoods?
- What agencies, if any, are they affiliated with?
- What are their workforce concerns?
- What are their successes?
- How can you learn from them?
- Are there community-identified solutions to some of these priority issues?
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