



TAPP INTO

Success Story from Blue Cross Funded Organizations

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Success Story

“The community needs to feel taken into account. This is why the Consulate’s partnership with CLUES is so positive. As the staff for the Ventanilla de Salud program, Maria Fatima Jaramillo approaches the people with care.”

The Honorable Consul of México Ana Luisa Fajer

The Partners of Ventanilla de Salud – Health Window Program

Ventanilla de Salud – Health Window Program – is a partnership between Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) and the Consulate General of México in St. Paul, MN to improve the health of people coming to the Consulate. Mexican nationals visit the Consulate regularly to renew their passports, obtain Matrícula Consular ID cards, and naturalization papers, among other services. The Consulate has several “bank teller” like windows to serve the public. The Ventanilla de Salud has its own “teller window” just for health promotion, prevention and referrals.

The partnership with CLUES began in 2005, when the Consulate of México opened its doors in St. Paul, Minnesota. Community Health Workers (CHWs) from CLUES started educating visitors and users of the Consulate about the health, economic and social risks and consequences of tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke, as well as disseminating the results of the DREGAN Project – a community based participatory research and action project sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Clearway Minnesota in partnership with CLUES. Later, healthy eating and other relevant health promotion and prevention issues were included. These community health workers were contracted by CLUES to staff the Ventanilla de Salud when the program started in 2008. CLUES provides personnel and support for the Ventanilla de Salud and the government of México provides funding for the position. This program utilizes the trust built between the Community Health Worker, María Fátima Jaramillo and people coming to the Consulate.

With the main objective of the program being health promotion and disease prevention, the Ventanilla de Salud program has three components:

- 1) information and education on health promotion and disease prevention, including the creating awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and second hand smoke exposure;
- 2) referrals to low cost or no cost health agencies and insurance providers
- 3) follow up with clients to ensure their needs were met.



Community Health Worker Maria Fátima comes to the Consulate five days a week, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. She also participates in the mobile consulates in greater Minnesota, Wisconsin, and South Dakota, and during weekend events, to educate about health promotion and disease prevention, health insurance, access to health care services, referrals to tobacco cessation programs, and other relevant health and social services to a wider audience.

“ This program is successful because I have the opportunity to work face to face with more than 3,400 people a year ”

Maria Fatima Jaramillo

Key To The Program's Success

“This program is successful because I have the opportunity to work face to face with more than 3,400 people a year,” said Ms. Jaramillo “In many ways, I have the opportunity to hear from and connect with the people about their needs.”

While 90% of the clients are from México, the program works with Spanish speakers from different countries in Central and South America, as well as with a variety of ages from young adults to seniors. The Consulate and CLUES decided to leverage CLUES' expertise in community health with the Consulate's role as a community hub to create the Ventanilla de Salud.

With a built-in community of people who come to the Consulate, the program is able to connect with people while they are waiting for their appointments at the Consulate and provide education in a non-intrusive way.

Another key to the success of the program is the integration of service delivery and increasing access to health care with health education. There is a high satisfaction among the clients of the program because of its effectiveness in facilitating connections between health care providers and their clients. In one case, the program was able to get free mental health treatment from the Mayo Clinic for one of their clients. This comes from the extensive follow-up that Ms. Jaramillo has with the users of the Ventanilla de Salud. She helps clients to set and complete their appointments with health care providers and serves as an advocate for the patients. Because of her expertise working with her community, she can anticipate concerns and communicate them to service providers. She also helps service providers ask for sensitive health information from her clients in a culturally competent manner.

Additionally, Ms. Jaramillo has built strong relationships with mainstream health care providers through connecting with the staff personally. She has leveraged her contacts among other Community Health Workers to create a network of providers with whom she can follow up.

Finally, she has been active in health fairs and community events to identify providers for the network. Recently, the program hosted a meeting between the Mexican Secretary of Health, the Ventanilla de Salud partners, and the CEOs of the health agencies that work with the program to share the progress and successes.

Ms. Jaramillo continually asks her clients about their referrals and how she can more effectively facilitate the care given. “My role is to bridge the gap of information for my clients,” said Ms. Jaramillo.

With the trust built, Ms. Jaramillo educates her clients on health promotion and prevention including the dangers of tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke, the benefits of healthy nutrition and physical activity, and how to prevent chronic diseases. She facilitates their access to screenings, tobacco cessation programs, health care and other services available in their neighborhoods and in México.



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Next Steps – Expanding the Impact

As Ms. Jaramillo continually builds relationships for the Ventanilla de Salud program, the partners are expanding in several ways. The first was to increase the number of hours the community health worker is available to 25 per week. This allows for greater time for health education and intake for clients. The partners also increased the budget to have Ms. Jaramillo accompany the eight mobile consulate units coordinated by the Consulate of México that travel around Minnesota from April to October. These consulates provide the same services as the Saint Paul-based Consulate. This allows the program to reach people other cities in the jurisdiction, like Sioux Falls, and also many underserved rural areas in Minnesota. Ms. Jaramillo is also expanding the scope of the consulate's work through free on-site health screenings and free vaccinations.

The Health Window Program is now in 42 of the 50 Mexican Consulates in the United States with a goal of expanding to all 50 Consulates. Nationally, the program aims to have the health information provided in the Consulates to reach families in México. Additionally, the Consulate is hoping to connect the Mexico-based relatives of the families they work with in the United States with the Mexican Popular Insurance program (Seguro Popular). In this way the impact of the Ventanilla de Salud is being felt across borders.

Just as the Ventanillas de Salud have an “echo effect” on families on both sides of the border in terms of disease prevention and health promotion, so does changing environments and institutional policies. On May 1st, 2010, CLUES was able to institutionalize a smoke and nicotine free institutional policy in all of its buildings, grounds, parking lots and vehicles. When clients come to the Mexican Consulate they now see a prominent sign that states that CLUES and the Mexican Consulate located in its premises, is a smoke-free/nicotine free campus. This sign sends a message that is also heard from the Ventanilla de Salud personnel, that second hand smoke is a carcinogen and that it damages the health not just of the smokers but of all who breathe it.

The Ventanilla de Salud refers people to free tobacco cessation programs, which enhance the lives of not just one individual but of the whole family. This policy is an added value to the work of the Ventanilla de Salud, since it makes it clear that all work environments, homes and automobiles should be smoke free. México has passed several Clean Indoor Air ordinances and most states have also made this a norm. The effort of the Health Window Program, combined with private policies such as the one created by CLUES becomes an example of successes for all 50 Mexican consulates.



Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) receives training and technical assistance through the Technical Assistance for Priority Populations to Implement a Norm Change on Tobacco (TAPP INTO) program. The TAPP INTO Program is a comprehensive community-competent technical assistance and training program that supports community organizations working with African, African American, Latino, LGBT, and Southeast Asians in Minnesota. The goal of the TAPP INTO program is to build the capacity of these priority population serving organizations in Minnesota and their emerging coalitions to implement successful tobacco control programs and policies and eventually reduce tobacco prevalence, exposure to secondhand smoke, and other tobacco disparities. This work is supported by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) as part of a health improvement initiative funded by tobacco settlement dollars that addresses root causes of preventable heart disease and cancer. Blue Cross' prevention efforts with high priority populations include a commitment to build community capacity to work on health promotion efforts.