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CREATING ENDURING HEALTH EQUITY

NAHRO Submission for the Community Health Advocate Program of Spokane, WA
(Submitted January 16, 2015)

The Spokane Housing Authority (SHA) in partnership with Foundation for Healthy Generations (Healthy Gen – formerly Comprehensive Health Education Foundation) and the Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) implemented an innovative and resident-driven Community Health Advocate (CHA) program to improve the individual and community health of public housing residents. This innovative pilot was adapted from Community Health Worker literature in the US and overseas. Healthy Gen provided seed funding to pilot a Community Health Advocates (CHA) program; and started with one public housing resident to be a Community Health Advocate (CHA) at one SHA property. Property residents included seniors and individuals with disabilities. The CHA was tasked to provide outreach and engagement to other residents around health issues. The Spokane Regional Health District joined in this effort by providing Community Health Worker (CHW) training in breast, cervical and colorectal cancer education & outreach resources. The program received local recognition from the Spokesman-Review which highlighted the program's ability to remove barriers for testing and access to medical care. To expand the program, the Spokane Regional Health District applied and received a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Grant (SNAP-ED). At that point, ten SHA Residents were selected to become Community Health Advocates (CHAs). The CHAs are fellow SHA residents and are trusted members of their communities. Teams of CHAs, of varying sizes based on property population, represent five distinct SHA properties. CHAs completed trainings to equip them with greater health knowledge and health literacy. Additional trainings enhanced CHA skills in community outreach and expanded their awareness of local community resources. Advocates are required to spend 16 to 20 hours a month in training and activities designed to increase the health of residents. A \$175 per month stipend was established for their work. This amount was set intentionally to avoid interfering with other benefits advocates receive (SNAP, Medicaid/Medicare, TANF, housing, etc.). Advocates will be encouraging, supporting, and leading a variety of resident-driven activities such as, nutrition classes, community gardens, one-to-one healthy living support, and walking groups. Advocates will also provide connections to critical daily resources to improve residents' health status such as, access to food banks, energy assistance, free and reduced cell phone service, clothing banks, and resources such as how to sign up for TANF. Healthy Gen and SRHD both credit the Spokane Housing Authority's leadership and partnership in making the program work. "Spokane Housing Authority's willingness to get in and work with us on solving the "nitty gritty" details of how to make this partnership work, like the CHA stipend payment, has been outstanding," said Donna Oliver, Program Manager at the Spokane Regional Health

District. SRHD will be conducting formative, process and outcome evaluations. This will be done through focus groups and community meetings that inform the CHA-led method and community interests, environmental scans that gather information about the housing locations and their surrounding communities related to the promotion of physical activity and healthy eating, and surveys of residents who participate in program activities to evaluate changes in physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption.

Attachments:

<http://m.spokesman.com/stories/2012/nov/20/color-ectal-concern/>



Spokane CHAs.pdf