

Healthy Interventions Lead to Healthier Lives in Plaquemines Parish

CHALLENGE: Obesity, heart disease, and high cholesterol continue to be significant health issues in Plaquemines Parish. The lack of a unified, data-driven approach for changing the policies, systems, and environment to address the following issues were determined at the beginning of this process:

- 34.7% of adults in Plaquemines are considered obese.
- 5.8% of adults in Plaquemines have heart disease.
- 40.6% of adults have high cholesterol
- Access to primary care is extremely low

SOLUTION: CCWIC acting as the backbone agency, and utilizing the Plaquemines Parish Medical Center, trained representatives from various community organizations on the concept of collective impact. Training was critical in order to educate the group and shift the paradigm of working in isolation to steady, ongoing collaboration. The focus of the training and implementation of this project was to maximize impact by synergizing across government, business, churches, non-profit agencies and citizens to achieve significant and lasting change. In addition, to developing a well-equipped coalition, we had to embed the project into the community for sustainability. Involving both a local Community Navigator and the medical center from the beginning proved to be a critical approach in us accomplishing this goal. Hosting meetings at the medical center was vital in centralizing the work and will allow this project to maintain progress after the grant funding period. With each meeting, the medical center's leadership became more involved and committed to the goals and objectives. .

RESULTS: The trained group evolved into a cohesive coalition and developed the community action plan (CAP), giving the individual organizations a common agenda, collaborative activities and shared performance measures. While at the same time, the medical center is becoming the hub for all medical and health-related needs, activities, and events. The coalition is also affecting:

Policy. We worked with Plaquemines Parish Government, Plaquemines Medical Center, Plaquemines School Board, and local YMCAs in assisting them to become breastfeeding friendly for both the public and for their female employees. Breastfeeding is important to start a baby with the nutrients, calories, and fluids needed to be healthy.

The system, by facilitating several farmer markets to be able to accept WIC and SNAP, which allows low-income residents to have accessibility to healthy options.

The environment where Plaquemines Medical Center has created monthly health awareness campaigns for the general public, posts ongoing health-related messages, campaigns and promotions on their marquee, and is in the process of adding more staff such as an orthopedist. To foster healthier choices earlier in life, several local agencies are conducting Organ Wise Guys sessions for school-aged children. Organ Wise Guys has generated interest outside of Plaquemines Parish. In fact, hundreds of more children outside of Plaquemines Parish were taught lessons on the importance of keeping their organs healthy.

SUMMARY: As we bring this project to a close, while CCWIC will still be involved and play a vital role in a Healthy Plaquemines Now, the medical center with its resources is picking up the torch. The Medical Coordinator is preparing to continue implementing many of the current strategies while adding a few new ones. As a result of the work done over the last 14 months, with the medical center's leadership, the parish has an anchor to continue efforts at addressing local health inequities.

Getting Involved: Continued changes in local policies, systems, and the environment are key in creating a healthier Plaquemines Parish. If you would like to join our coalition, contact Raymund Ferrer of the Plaquemines Parish Health Department at (504) 934-6690. Small daily changes are vital in over-hauling an unhealthy lifestyle. Start today! Choose healthier foods like fresh fruits and vegetables with daily physical activity and you will feel the difference.

**Crescent City WIC Services Inc. (CCWIC)
Success Story - Demonstration**

March 9, 2016

Quote: “Here we have an excellent opportunity to expand much needed services and educational programs that Plaquemines Parish has not had on a consistent basis. Concentrating on healthy eating and wellness among children, their parents, and their grandparents will help keep our next generations healthier.” – Monica Martin, Plaquemines Medical Center.

Story Contact:

Mary Schultheis
Project Coordinator
Healthy Plaquemines Now!
(CPHMC sub-recipient)
Crescent City WIC Services, Inc.
429 Wall Blvd.
Gretna, La 70056
(504) 451-0414
(504) 247-0592