

**United States Department of Agriculture: Food and Nutrition Service
FINAL PROGRESS REPORT**

Grant Number: FSOR-06-FL-1

Report Submission Date: December 31, 2007

Reporting Period: September 18, 2006 – September 30, 2007

Grant Recipient: Inter-Cultural Family Health Education Center, Inc.
2300 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd. Ste 103
West Palm Beach, FL 33409

Project Director: Yanick M. Abellard, MPH, Project Director
Phone: (561) 615-3838 Email: ifhec@hotmail.com

Organizational Description

Mission Statement: To address the severe shortage of health education programs for minority and disadvantaged populations in Palm Beach County.

Statement of Purpose: I.F.H.E.C. is organized as a non-profit organization with exclusively charitable purposes. The specific purpose is to provide a community-based program that will promote and maintain the health of the minorities of Palm Beach County.

Vision Statement: To provide health education and to assist in the coordination of health programs for minority and disadvantaged populations. I.F.H.E.C. seeks to promote community interest, establish and/or reinforce good health behaviors, act as an advocate of family needs, and prepare its participants to be healthy, educated, and employable.

Intercultural Family Health Education Center, Inc. (I.F.H.E.C.) is a minority run, community based incorporated as a nonprofit organization (501(c) 3) in January 1994 in Palm Beach County. Its mission is to provide health education programs for disadvantaged minority populations in Palm Beach County. I.F.H.E.C.'s primary focus has been the rapidly growing, underserved Haitian population. Past Programs include: "Giving Haitian Teens A New Direction", Breast Health Among Haitian Women, AIDS/ HIV prevention workshops, Prenatal health and parenting classes, and. Health Screening Fairs.

Target Population Working Poor, Seniors, **Immigrants X-**

The Food Stamp Outreach Project primarily targets the Haitian immigrant population in Palm Beach County. Within this population, there is generally a lack of awareness of the Food Stamp program's existence and/or misconceptions about their eligibility for the program. In addition to a social stigma associated with the appearance of poverty, the Haitian immigrant population is also limited in English proficiency and literacy. They are not familiar with complex government welfare programs and have difficulty navigating and negotiating for services.

Summary of Project

The goal of the Food Stamp Outreach project is to motivate eligible clients to participate in food stamp program by teaching prospective applicants the benefits of participating in the Food Stamp Program, dispelling myths and misconceptions of the program, especially as it relates to their immigration status, and providing hands-on assistance and navigation throughout the application process. Various community partners, including local Haitian churches, local food stamp retailers, and health clinics will assist in the implementation of the project. Outreach will take place in churches, through radio, telephone, and home visit strategies.

Staffing/Budget Information (include paid/volunteer staff and grant/other funding and in-kind contributions);

Program Staff: Yanick M. Abellard, MPH, Project Director
Guerson Laguerre, Food Stamp Specialist
Denise Benoit, Cultural Guide
Gethro Pierre-Louis, Volunteer
Marie Hypolite, Volunteer
Sandy Exilhomme, Volunteer

Overall Goal:

To increase eligible Food Stamp participants and identify deterrence to participation

GOAL 1: To manage a culturally competent community based education and promotion food stamp program

Objective 1:1 To plan for Program Implementation

The program has been implemented successfully.

Objective 1.2: To gain training and experience in Food Stamp Issues

All project staff attended training at the Florida Department of Children and Families. Staff also received cultural competency training in outreach and social marketing techniques. Kathie Beeson also provided in-office training sessions on a regular basis.

Objective 1.3: To develop network of community partners

Many community agencies had referred prospective food stamp clients to IFHEC.

I.F.H.E.C. developed a network of community partners to assist in outreaching the community about the Food Stamp program's availability. We established relationships with radio stations, and utilized relationships with Haitian churches and clergymen, and retailers. We worked closely with the Homeless Outreach program at the West Palm Beach County Health Department.

GOAL 2: To motivate eligible clients to participate in the food stamp program

Objective 2.1: To teach the target population the benefits of participating in the food stamp program

The staff conducted ten (10) workshops in local churches, outreaching 1593 unduplicated persons according to documented attendance records. 1578 flyers and informational packages were distributed throughout the year.

The Food Stamp Outreach Project utilized a radio program that reached an estimated 40,000 listeners according to the station manager. Because of the overwhelming response to the radio outreach education program we had to adjust the number of radio shows.

1: Project Deliverables – Sep 18, 2006 – Sep 30, 2007

Units of Services	Annual Capacity	Cumulative Outcomes
1.1 Participants Assisted with Application	500	560
1.2 Participants Assisted Via Home Visits Using Cultural Guide	N/A	272 (duplicated)
1.3 Navigation Assistance	100	232
1.4 Church Presentations	10	10
1.5 Participants In Attendance	1000	1593
1.6 Weekly Radio Programs*	40	40
1.7 Participants Outreached Weekly Via Radio	25,000	>40,000
1.8 Material Distribution (Flyers & Info Package)	1200	1578

*(Note: See Adjustments/Deviations from Project Plan)

GOAL 3: To increase the number of eligible clients in the food stamp program

Objective 3.1: Target population to receive training/assistance in applying for food stamps

The Food Stamp Specialist, with the help of trained volunteers, created a database of potential clients using pre-existing data on current clients receiving other I.F.H.E.C. services and new prospects identified in the outreach process. 560 participants were assisted in the application process for the year, including completing electronic forms online in-office, and home visits to clients without transportation to complete paper applications. The Cultural Guide conducted home visitation for 272 clients for the year; 232 clients received navigation assistance for the year, including translation of correspondence and assistance in gathering necessary personal documentation, documentation recorded and available upon request.

Objective 3.2: To provide follow-up assistance to the clients

When clients notified staff that they received a follow up letter from DCF, the Food Stamp Specialist translated and explained the letter and its requirements. If the clients did not receive a letter, the Food Stamp Specialist assisted the client in calling the DCF office to clarify the matter.

Case Examples of Individual or Family Success Stories

Clients who are qualified for food stamp are also automatically qualified for a special public health insurance in Palm Beach County (Health Care District Option 1) if they take time to apply).

Barriers to Participation (discuss how issues regarding non-participation were identified, addressed, overcome/reduced):

1) A significant barrier is the limited staff available to follow up clients' applications due to the urgency of the demands of new applications. Translation and interpretation services were conducted. However, intense client follow up was limited. (i.e. providing information to clients on application status, scheduling appointment dates, and completing outstanding verifications for eligibility). Volunteer use is limited due to confidentiality and liability policies. However, many clients did self report the benefits received.

2) Occasionally, clients reported not receiving confirmation letters after applying online. This aberration was perhaps due to user, or technological error, but cultural barriers might affect client perception (i.e. limited English proficiency, moving often, other cultural misconceptions about official correspondence). In response, each client receives a paper copy of their signed application. A duplicate is kept on file at I.F.H.E.C. The printing and copying costs subsequently exceeded those projected.

3) During online application sessions with clients, periodic computer technical difficulties (freezing, etc) hindered timely processing. In response to such difficulties, the Food Stamp Specialist educated the client on the application process until systems were restored. Some clients opted to complete paper applications.

4) At the end of the fourth quarter we had a minimum of 146 clients on a waiting list for application assistance. Unfortunately we have to close the program because of lack of funding.

5) Home-bound seniors don't get out to apply. Lack of information and cultural issues prevented some seniors from applying for food stamps. One senior told us "the hardest thing for me was to ask for help when I didn't have enough money to eat and could not find transportation". Some seniors cry throughout the entire application process.

This low-income population has less information than younger adults do about the types of government assistance they might be eligible for; the volume of misinformation is greater and the sources of information are more limited.

6) Focus group discussants were asked about the factors that influence decision to apply for food stamp benefits. The most common reasons were:

- Lack of transportation to community centers
- Clients feel like they have to give up their life to be on public assistance
- Stigma/image of being on food stamps

- Too much paperwork for too little food stamps
- Limited office hours at food stamp offices
- Lack of familiarity with food stamp program
- Resistance to change
- Misinformation among immigrants
- Lack of trust of government
- Inability to reach the consumer service office / high call volume
- Language barriers and low/no literacy

Final Summary Progress Report of the Project from Start to Finish:

Major Achievements/Accomplishments (include training of staff and volunteers; turnover in staff and how that impacted the project):

Staff Training:

All staff received training at the Florida Department of Children and Families. The trainings were led by Kathie Beeson, Sr. Human Services Program Specialist, ESS. Kathie also provided in-office training for the program staff during an Access Partner site visit on November 21, 2006. Another important training provided in office on June 12, 2007 by the Department of Children and Family Services was on how to become a Platinum Level Provider. The West Palm Beach DCF office is located at the following address: 111. S. Sapodilla Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL 33401. Kathie Beeson can be reached by phone at (561) 837-5660 and by email at KathieBeeson@dcf.state.fl.us.

Staff Turnover:

The Food Stamp Outreach Project experienced no staff turnover during the reporting period.

Process Objectives:

The activities listed under the Project Plan Action steps were successfully implemented during the grant period.

Lessons Learned:

The project addressed the lack of awareness for the immigrant population regarding the Food Stamp program. The overwhelming audience response to the radio programming revealed the extensive dearth of knowledge of the Food Stamp program. The radio program demystified the Food Stamp Program. Many of our clients did not have computer or internet access or skills. Ninety-Six percent (538 clients) were not ready to learn new technological skills. Clients verbally reported their satisfaction with the knowledge, commitment, and friendliness of the staff as well as the convenience of I.F.H.E.C.'s hours of operation, 1:00 pm – 9:00 pm.

Major Difficulties/Challenges and Solutions Developed (include issues that may have affected the project outcome, such as changes in: staffing, collaborative arrangements, target population/ participant characteristics, etc.):

As we are implementing the project the difficulties and challenges encountered decrease.

1) A significant barrier is the limited staff available to follow up clients' applications due to the urgency of the demands of new applications. Translation and interpretation services were conducted. However, intense client follow up was limited. (i.e. providing information to clients on application status, scheduling appointment dates, and completing outstanding verifications for eligibility). Volunteer use is limited due to confidentiality and liability policies. However, many clients did self report the benefits received.

2) At the end of the fourth quarter we had a minimum of 146 clients on a waiting list for application assistance. Unfortunately we have to close the program because of lack of funding.

Evaluation Methodology and Findings (Results, types of data/information collected, how collected, how analyzed, limitations and cautions on its use, interpretations and conclusions):

Results:

The primary purpose of evaluation is to measure, as much as possible the subsequent impact of the program on the target population. A comprehensive program evaluation is not possible, given the resources and circumstances of this small project. At this point, it is only possible to do a process evaluation. The program is being implemented successfully.

The first step we took was to identify reasonable expectations at the time of program design. This project evaluation for the third quarter is attempting to answer the following questions:

1) What the project has done for the participants?

Participants with little previous knowledge learned the benefits of participating in the Food Stamp program. Clients with no computer skills and no access to the internet received online application assistance. Clients without transportation received personal assistance in their homes. Clients with limited understanding of the application process received navigation assistance.

2) How well it was done/ strengths-

The project was implemented as specified in the project plan table. I.F.H.E.C. speaks the language and understands the culture of the target population. The staff is also patient and friendly in their communication with clients. The radio program contributed to decrease barriers caused by misinformation, that prevented them from immediately applying for food stamps. The center is conveniently open from 1pm – 9pm, appropriate for the availability of the target population. The cultural guide visits the homes of sick or home bound clients without transportation to personally assist them with their applications.

3) What should have been done/ weaknesses-

Understaffing limits the follow up possible for the clients. In addition, many clients cannot understand the confusing terminology and presentation of the letters received, even though they are in Creole. They are anxious about attending the DCF meeting, and some lack reliable transportation.

4) Why the project succeeded or failed?

The project succeeded because of aforementioned strengths and the commitment of the staff.

Table 2: Formative Evaluation

Items	Ordinal Scale			
	U	F	E	N/A
2.1 Target population gives input on project design, planning and evaluation.		X		
2.2 Goals and objectives are reasonable.		X		
2.3 Interventions reach appropriate target population.		X		
2.4 Quality assurance and control mechanism established.		X		
2.5 Staff receives appropriate training and skill development.		X		
2.6 Program implemented as originally specified.		X		
2.7 Ideal contact hours spent per client (30 -60 minutes)		X		
2.8 Rate and level of attainment of program objectives.			X	
2.9 Strengths and weaknesses of program elements ascertained.		X		
2.10 Project promotes positive public relations and community awareness.			X	
2.11 Program met demand for public and fiscal accountability.		X		
2.12 Fulfilling grant or contract requirements.		X		

U – Unacceptable F- Fully Met requirements E - Exceeded Requirements N/A- Not /Applicable

Table 3: Summative Evaluation

Items	Ordinal Scale			
	U	F	E	N/A
3.1 Participants Assisted with Application			X	
3.2 Participants Assisted Via Home Visits Using Cultural Guide				X
3.3 Navigation Assistance			X	
3.4 Church Presentations		X		
3.5 Participants In Attendance			X	
3.6 Weekly Radio Programs		X		
3.7 Participants Outreached Weekly Via Radio			X	
3.8 Material Distribution (Flyers & Info Package)			X	

U – Unacceptable F- Fully Met requirements E - Exceeded Requirements N/A- Not /Applicable

(Note: See Adjustments/Deviations from Project Plan)

Type of Data Collected

During the planning phase we designed the evaluation by selecting items /deliverables/units of services to be monitored for program success/failure or implementation review. Our plan was to measure goal attainment based on a carefully pre-specified set of measurable goals. We have collected data directly on contract deliverables that will quantify program effects and effectiveness.

Measurements collected include: the total number of participants assisted with applications, including those assisted via home visitation; the number of participants who received navigation assistance; the number of church presentations delivered; number of participants in attendance at church workshops; and the number of written promotional materials distributed; and financial accounting records.

Qualitative data gives substance to those areas of focus. We felt the need to personalize the evaluation process by using humanistic methods that emphasize personal, face-to-face contact with the program participants to determine what clients experience.

How Data Was Collected

The first level of evaluation encompasses the collection of evidence that demonstrates whether the program is being implemented. We have developed explicit record keeping documenting the clients served by date. The Project Director, Food Stamp Specialist, and Cultural Guide document project activities every time a unit of service is provided. We developed a prescreening form, workshop evaluation form and an attendance form. We conducted workshop observations, participant observations, case histories, and informal interviews. We have retained a hard copy of all Food Stamp applications submitted. Methods of qualitative data collection include face-to-face informal interview and unobtrusive observation.

How Data Was Analyzed

The data was analyzed by comparing the pre-specified baseline parameters per the grant contract deliverables to the outcomes achieved. The record keeping is a system management tool. We use a holistic approach to assessing clients' personal experiences.

For a better understanding of project outcomes we have cumulated the deliverables for all four quarters.

The Food Stamp Outreach Project assisted 560 clients with application, (Table 1. Item 1.1) exceeding the deliverables capacity for the year.

272 of those clients were served via home visits by the cultural guide for the year. No parameter existed for that service (Table 1. Item 1.2).

232 clients received navigation assistance, exceeding the parameter for the year. (Table 1. Item 1.3).

10 church presentations were conducted, meeting the cumulative parameter (Table 1. Item 1.4). Church presentation attendance numbered 1593, exceeding the parameter for the year (Table 1. Item 1.5).

Flyers and informational packages distributed 1578, meeting and exceeding the parameter for the year (Table 1. Item 1.8).

Currently, the evaluation assumes that the outcomes directly result from project activities.

Limitations and Cautions

Due to the relatively short duration of the project to date, and the limited resources available for this project, long-term impact on participant behavior cannot be adequately assessed, or observed. With necessary funding, a summative evaluation could include a control group with which to evaluate educational impact. A control group would include prospective participants who have not received learning interventions compared with actual clients who have received

those interventions. Other suggestions include expert panel review, community and participant surveys, and program utilization and record reviews, and a site visit from Food Stamp Outreach office.

Interpretations and Conclusions

As aforementioned, this process evaluation verifies that the project is being implemented as designed and the grant contract objectives are being met. The Food Stamp Outreach Project has been successful in accomplishing the process objectives of the grant contract due to the quality of the planning process and the staff dedication. All activities were performed in a timely manner and the deliverables for the project were met or exceeded. Qualitatively, the project produced a positive effect on public awareness in the target population. The program should be continued in its present form with the available resources. However, with an increase in resources for staff, the project could be improved.

Conclusions (whether project participants demonstrated changes in awareness, knowledge, attitude, behavior, and if these changes are likely the result of the project's interventions):

Due to limited staff we were unable to implement a knowledge attitude behavioral assessment. To collect information on those relevant issues we have conducted a community forum approach. We were able to understand the inter-relationships among various forces in the community. The increase in client participation in food stamp program was a result of a well planned education program as well as project interventions in terms of awareness, knowledge, change in attitude and behavior. All level of staff have participated in the education project: church workshops were presented by the program director, media education by the food stamp program specialist and the outreach worker as well as community leaders.

Various community partners, including local Haitian churches, local food stamp retailers, and health clinics contributed to the success of the project.

Recommendations for Replication by Other Organizations (include discussion of what changes you would make or what you would do differently):

With increase in staffing this program can be easily replicated by other organizations especially those serving immigrants. The lacking component is a training of church leaders to assist the members of their church with the application process.

Sustainability Plan (Strategy to continue the project after FNS grant funding ends):

It will be difficult to sustain the program as previously implemented. With lack of funding the number of clients served will be reduced to 10% with the help of volunteers. Another alternative will be to charge small fees to assist with the application process according to the principle of social entrepreneurship. We are looking for general operating expenses from other funders.

Other Comments (include feedback from project staff, volunteers, food stamp office contracts, project clients, etc.)

Comment from the food stamp program specialist: “I didn’t know the need was so great in the Haitian community”.

Comment from a client: “I didn’t know I was eligible for food stamps because I was working. Thanks to IFHEC I am receiving now \$496 on a monthly basis”.

Comment from another client: “I was afraid that getting food stamps will affect my children and grand children green cards. The staff at IFHEC is very nice and knowledgeable. Now I am receiving food stamps in the amount of \$150 a month and I can eat better”.

Adjustments/Deviations from Project Plan:

We had to adjust the implementation plan for the radio outreach educational program to be held weekly during the first 3 quarters. No radio program held during the fourth quarter. Again, a significant barrier is the limited staff available to handle questions that need to be answered promptly.

Planned Activities Next Reporting Period:

To implement pilot sustaining plan.

Signature of Authorized Official:

Date: