
COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

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The Hispanic community in Bryan/College Station includes a population of at least 27,000. Many of these families could be classified as belonging to an under-served population. With a large portion of the Hispanic population being uninsured and thereby with decreased access to health care services, an important avenue to maintain and improve health is through *health education and outreach*. In addition, many Hispanics have a language obstacle, speaking only Spanish or having an insufficient understanding and use of the English language.



The Community Outreach and Education Program (COEP) is now addressing this need in the community through a Promotora Program. *Promotora* is a Spanish term for lay community educator, also known as community worker. A promotora is a trusted member of the community who wants to improve the well being of their community. Promotoras often focus on health and health-related issues.

The COEP with Texas A&M Center for Environmental and Rural Health has established a partnership with health care providers and community-based organizations to develop a promotora program for the Brazos Valley. The organizations involved in the program include the Bryan/College Station Community Health Center (Lori Bui), the Brazos County Health Department (Sara Mendez), *Better Living for Texans* (Dee Dee Matthews), and St. Joseph Regional Health Center (Alyssa Locklear), Bryan Independent School District (Marlyn Milton), and Fiestas Patrias (Alma Villarreal). The

primary goal of the program is to improve the health of the under-served populations in the Brazos Valley through education and facilitating access and utilization of the health care system. The program has the following objectives:

- identify trusted members of the under-served Hispanic populations (followed by other minority, under-served groups) who could serve as promotoras;
- identify and prioritize 4 to 5 concerns in the selected community;
- train 4 to 6 promotora volunteers in different aspects of health promotion and how to facilitate access to medical care;.
- provide specific health education to the targeted, under-served populations of our community;
- assess the effectiveness of the health education efforts; and
- replicate the promotoras program to other communities in the Brazos Valley

This promotora program will develop a bilingual, culturally sensitive, health education curriculum adapted to the needs and characteristics of the community. The projected start date is September 1, 2004. A long-term goal of the COEP is to have this Promotora Program serve as a model for other communities in the Brazos Valley and across Texas.