

LRHA Receives Better Health for the Delta Grant Funding

In 2005, LRHA received funding from Southeast Louisiana AHEC and HRSA through the Phase II of the Better Health for the Delta State Rural Health Network Development Grant Program. The purpose of the Better Health for the Delta program is to provide grants to strengthen the ability of rural community organizations to develop and implement successful multi-parish network projects that address local health care needs in rural Louisiana Delta Parishes.

In order to improve the health status of residents in Assumption, Iberia, Iberville and Pointe Coupee Parish, the Health Access Planning Network (HAPN) set forth a three-pronged strategy.

1) **Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Education/ Enrolment Outreach Activities**

The first prong of the strategy addressed improving access to prescription assistance programs by conducting outreach and education activities specific to the Medicare prescription drug plan. HAPN assisted over 1,800 Medicare beneficiaries with increasing access to prescription assistance. A local provider recently stated, “You would not imagine the time and trouble you have saved me by helping these folks understand Medicare Part D. When they walk into my office, most of them are already schooled and have no questions for me. When I am approached with a Part D problem, I send them to you. You don’t realize how much my staff and myself appreciate all of your help.” This statement alone stands to reason why our prescription assistance prong of our program was a success.

2) **Five for Live Program**

Childhood obesity is a growing epidemic in the United States. Childhood obesity affects more than 30 percent of children, making it the most common chronic disease of childhood. In order to improve the health status of the identified parishes, the second prong of strategy addressed obesity intervention. HAPN worked in collaboration with the School Board in each parish to implement the Five for Life Program in two schools in each parish. The goal of the program is to provide a curriculum to students that develop an understanding and value for living an active life and practicing healthy nutritional habits that lead to life-long wellness. The Five for Life Program, developed by Focused Fitness, is an exciting, innovated integrated curriculum that is designed to increase student activity levels during physical education, improve student fitness levels, and teach academic content in the gym. By implementing this obesity intervention program in Assumption, Iberia, Iberville and Pointe Coupee Parish, HAPN provided the necessary tools and building blocks to over 3,200 children to promote a healthy life style to decrease the risk of obesity and chronic disease.

3) Grand Ideas From Within

The third prong of the program addressed implementing a mental/behavioral health intervention program in grades 6-12 in the four parish service area. HAPN join forces with the authors of Grand Ideas from Within (GIFW). GIFW is the first guided imagery manual that meets a school's curriculum standards. The Grand Ideas from Within curriculum provides teachers with five-minute scripts for daily classroom use to promote good mental health, self-esteem as well as improved behavior. The program is designed to be used in the classroom on a daily basis by the teachers or by the Social Workers and Guidance Counselors. Our partner, St. Gabriel Community Health Center (Iberville Parish) is currently using the GIFW program on an individual basis as well as in a group setting in the school based clinic. The program was implemented school wide at Plaquemine High School in August 2007. All of the Social Workers and Guidance Counselors in Pointe Coupee Parish were trained on the GIFW program implemented the program in the 2007-2008 school year.

SUSTAINABILITY

All three components of the HAPN program are self-sustaining and have continued to be successful beyond the Better Health for the Delta Phase II funding cycle. The train-the-trainer model of the Medicare Prescription Drug plan as well as the partnerships formed allowed other networks to continue to educate/enroll beneficiaries into the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan. The funding period for phase II ended on January 31, 2008; however, the teachers are committed to the Five for Life curriculum as well as the GIFW curriculum. Both the Five for Life curriculum as well as the GIFW program will remain as part of the curriculum for the 2008-2009 school year.