

Worksite Wellness LA Proposal to QueensCare Charitable Division

The project for which Worksite Wellness LA is seeking funding is the Champions for Change Program, sponsored by the California Department of Health Services, which is a preventive health education project aimed at reducing the incidence of chronic illness such as heart disease, cancer, obesity, and diabetes by promoting the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and daily physical activity among workers and their families. Included in this program is an effort to facilitate enrollment in available healthcare programs and make referrals to safety net service providers who offer no-cost or low-cost programs.

Population Served

Our service area encompasses Los Angeles County designations of Service Planning Areas (SPAs) 4, 6, and 7, and most of its service area falls into QueensCare's Primary Service Area, with some falling into the Secondary Service Area. The population in this region is largely made up of Latin American immigrants who have been in the United States for five years or less. They are mostly monolingual Spanish speaking, are often at a low literacy level, and earn low wages in manual labor jobs. Our target population is largely comprised of young families with three to four children, two to three of whom are under five years of age.

Approximately 70% of the service area population is Latino, with more than 30% of residents not speaking English well—twice as many as in Los Angeles County and three times as many as in California as a whole. Fully 69% live on earnings below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$37,700 for a family of four in 2004). Their employers either do not offer any form of health insurance or offer only benefits that are cost prohibitive. Sixty-six percent of these adults and children are uninsured, and 44% report they are in poor to fair health.

As the most populous county in the United States, Los Angeles is also one of the most common entry points for recent immigrants, particularly those from Mexico and Central America. Many of these new immigrants find employment in low-wage industries such as agriculture or manufacturing, where employers control costs by minimizing worker benefits. The manufacturing industry, which figures predominantly within WWLA's geographic target area, employs 383,800 people.¹ The apparel and textile manufacturing industry employs 143,000 people from our target community.

Our target population, of whom approximately two thirds (68%) are female, work long hours, often seven days a week to help support an average family of five, and face many barriers to accessing healthcare services. A high percentage of workers do not have a medical home and do not seek preventive care, resulting in high morbidity rates among this population, as well as an increased use of emergency services that continues to burden an already overburdened system. Low literacy rates, lack of English language skills, distrust of the system, and lack of time or awareness of where to obtain information, all contribute to the paucity of knowledge about healthcare services among those who need it the most. Difficulty in completely



¹ 2000 U.S. Census supplemental survey.

assimilating into their adopted communities also creates a feeling of social isolation prohibiting many immigrants from seeking services that could help them to improve their situations.

The Los Angeles County Department of Health Survey (LAC/DHS), a population-based telephone survey of approximately 8,000 households in the County, examined health and health-related issues for adults and children. It found Latinos (46%) and Asian/Pacific Islanders (41%) were more likely to be inactive than whites (37%) and African-Americans (40%). It also showed a steady rise in obesity among adults, from 14.3% obese in 1997 to 19.3% in 2003. The epidemic is particularly severe in the African-American and Latino populations, where obesity rates have reached 31% and 24%, respectively.

Purpose of the Grant

WWLA is requesting funding in the amount of \$75,000 over a 12-month period to provide outreach and nutritional education to these low-income workers. Using the Champions for Change campaign, WWLA proposes to develop its program of organizing educational and outreach-oriented presentations at Los Angeles' manufacturing worksites in South, Central City, Downtown, and East Los Angeles by disseminating information on nutrition for those on limited budgets, and will also provide preventive education on related health topics, including diabetes and obesity. One-on-one follow-up with employees also will be provided to allow for relationship- and trust-building, which tends to spur improved compliance with outcomes. The program will take place over a 12-month time-frame.

WWLA's health education bilingual staff, including health promoters, will conduct culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate presentations on proper nutrition and the importance of physical activity, illustrated by PowerPoint presentations on the food pyramid and food groups, and on related preventive health topics including diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. As a complement to workers' meals or snacks, WWLA staff will distribute fresh fruits and vegetables, such as apples, oranges, melons, grapes, and carrots, and will encourage the inclusion of these in children's lunches and in home meals. Staff will



disseminate written information on inexpensive food items and dishes workers can prepare at home or pack for lunch for themselves and their families. Workers are invited to participate in quizzes that test their understanding of the information, and the winning team is awarded a lovely fruit basket. Referrals to healthcare programs and enrollment in healthcare plans to which some workers and their children are entitled are included among the objectives of these upbeat presentations. We provide health access information in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner, and assist

workers and their families with enrolling into health coverage programs; we also make referrals to no-cost or low-cost healthcare services. Moreover, we conduct follow-up phone calls with workers who request assistance in navigating safety net services, during which we will verify enrollment, utilization, and retention of coverage programs. Outreach and educational materials are culturally and linguistically appropriate and include information regarding Medi-Cal, Healthy Families and other no or low-cost health programs.

Project Objectives

WWLA anticipates achieving the following objectives during the 12-month grant period:

- Conducting nutrition and preventive health presentations to a minimum of 1,500 workers at downtown and surrounding area worksites, including topics such as appropriate activity levels and food choices for children; infant nutrition needs; and how to increase physical activity for families;
- Increasing awareness and knowledge of the importance of good nutrition among at least 25% of workers reached, based on a post-presentation test with scores of 80% or better;
- Providing healthcare referrals for a minimum 10% of workers and their families reached during the project; and
- Enrolling at least 10% of workers and/or their families in no- or low-cost health coverage.



Each objective is written in quantifiable terms, which

enables it to be assessed relative to an established

benchmark. For example, nutrition education and preventive health presentations will be made to 1,500 workers, which will be documented by staff through logs of presentations that will include the number of attendees. Similarly, presenters will assess the increase in awareness and knowledge of the importance of nutrition among at least 50% of workers reached by post-presentation test scores of 80% or better. Staff will document contacts with new worksites and healthcare referrals by maintaining logs of meetings, correspondence, and activities.

Agency Background and History

Founded in 1996, Worksite Wellness LA (WWLA) works to fulfill its mission *to improve the health status of low-income, medically underserved families through workplaces in Los Angeles County*. Previously operating under the auspices of a fiscal receiver, WWLA attained Federal non-profit status in June 2004 and began operating independently in July 2005. WWLA's mission translates into the following goals: 1) to improve access to healthcare; 2) to increase healthy behaviors among workers; 3) to build partnerships with healthcare and worker organizations that promote access to healthcare; 4) to increase employers' awareness, understanding, and acceptance of worksite health promotion; and 5) to identify, and promote low-cost health insurance products for uninsured workers and their families.

WWLA has successfully provided preventive health education and facilitated access to healthcare to low income, medically underserved workers and their families through obtaining lunch- and break-time access to manufacturing worksites ranging in size from 20 to more than 300 workers. At these sites, we provide presentations, on-site enrollment of workers and their families in healthcare entitlement programs, referrals to safety net providers offering no- or low-cost health services, and one-on-one follow-up and individual case conferencing to support relationship- and trust-building among a mostly Latino immigrant target population. WWLA currently is working with 19 worksites employing a combined total of 4,760 workers.