2020 Community Champions Achievement Award

Phoenixville Hospital
TOWER HEALTH

Title of Entry: Healthy Baby Program: Improving Access and Care for Underserved Pregnant Women

Division: Medium Organizations

Entrant’s Name and Title: Barbara O’Connor
Director of Community Health Education & Outreach

Phone: (610) 983-1022
Email: BarbaraM.OConnor@towerhealth.org

Team Members: Barbara O’Connor, MSN, RN, CDCES, Director of Community Health
Maria Garcia Alvarez, Bilingual Patient Representative
Mai Zubrow, Bilingual Patient Representative
Brunilda Vazquez, Bilingual Patient Representative
Karen Spector, BSN, RN, Community Health Nurse/ Birth Prep Educator

Women’s Health Pavilion Staff at Phoenixville Hospital
Axia Women’s Health – Valley Forge OB/GYN Phoenixville
Executive Summary:

Title: Healthy Baby Program: Improving Access and Care for Underserved Pregnant Women

Description of the Problem: In early 2015, our hospital began exploring the need for pregnancy care for underserved women in the community. As a local community hospital with strong collaborative community partnerships, the need for the Healthy Baby Program was recognized by community organizations. Letters of support were obtained from key organizations. Research was conducted on prenatal programs in the area and it was discovered that women were traveling out of our service area to a clinic approximately 20 miles away for prenatal care. Travelling outside of the community is not only challenging for pregnant women and their families, but there are serious concerns of risk to mother and baby during emergency situations. In addition to the travel, the fees for service could be an additional hardship for families. While the program is offered to all underserved women in the community, the targeted initial outreach was the Latino population. The hospital service area is a very diverse community with a growing Spanish speaking population. The Healthy Baby program gives women access to exceptional healthcare and bilingual navigation services right here in their own community.

Evidence: Maternal and child health plays an important role in the health of a community. Maternal, infant, and child health is a Leading Health Indicator of Healthy People 2020 with the goal of improving the health and wellness of mother, infants, and children. Healthy People 2020 objectives addressed by the Healthy Baby program include: increase the proportion of pregnant women who receive early and adequate prenatal care, reduce the rate of fetal and infant death, reduce preterm birth, and increase the proportion of women giving birth who attend a postpartum care visit.

Baseline Data: Prior to the development of the Health Baby Program, there were no similar pregnancy care programs in our community and no board-certified OB/GYN providers in our primary service area who serve uninsured and underinsured pregnant women from prenatal care through delivery. Primary and secondary data was obtained through multiple sources including community health needs assessments from local organizations, county health statistics, census data, and local data.

Intervention: In response to the Healthy People 2020 goals and identifying the need for the Healthy Baby program in our community, a multi-level intervention was developed and implemented. Initial efforts began at the grassroots level. Our newly hired bilingual patient representative visited local organizations to introduce the program to the community. Visits were conducted at nonprofit agencies and local churches, as well as health fairs and community events. Partnerships were formed with organizations that could help identify underserved women. The saying “if you build it, they will come,” proved to be true. Word quickly spread throughout the community and enrollment grew quickly. The next step was to work closely with the local OB practice to ensure patients were attending appointments. Our bilingual patient representative assisted patients with language barrier and helped patients navigate their care. Due to the increasing number of women enrolling in the program, a second bilingual patient representative was hired in May 2016. As a result of the increasing number of referrals to the
program, it was necessary to limit the program to zip codes within our hospital service area. The bilingual patient representatives serve as the first point of contact for women. They assist women with making OB appointments, getting prenatal bloodwork and ultrasounds, and navigation in the hospital. Bilingual patient representatives are certified medical interpreters (Spanish) and provide language interpretation to Spanish speaking persons. The bilingual patient representatives develop trust and mutual respect with the Latino population. Cultural sensitivity and language access are key factors in the success of the program.

**Results:** The success of the Healthy Baby program is due to a collaboration with the hospital, obstetrical practice, and supporting community organizations. Our first patient enrolled in the program in the summer of 2015. For the past five years, we have been able to provide quality prenatal, delivery, and post-partum care to women in our community thus improving maternal and child health. Over 1000 women have enrolled in the Healthy Baby Program and there have been over 800 deliveries to date. The Healthy Baby program offers services to women who may otherwise not receive them. The program is also making strides toward achieving the Healthy People 2020 goals of improving maternal and child health.

As the Healthy Baby program evolved, additional birth preparation educational programs have been added to improve maternal and child health. A birth preparation class for Spanish speaking women was piloted in 2018 and 12 women attended. In addition, through a partnership with our pediatric provider, 66 families received car seat education and a car seat in 2018. Through education, women receive the knowledge and skills necessary to care for themselves during pregnancy, childbirth, and beyond.

Women who have participated in the Healthy Baby Program report positive experiences and outcomes. Patient testimonials have been collected and shared. One participant stated, “I was so happy that they have staff that speak my language and can understand me.” Another participant shared “Learning how to use a car seat was so helpful so I can keep my baby safe.” Another stated ‘I was made to feel accepted and comfortable and felt like people truly cared about me and my baby.”

The Healthy Baby Program provides valuable information on how diverse our hospital community truly is. Women of different age groups, literacy levels, religions, languages, and cultures all need access to prenatal, delivery, and post-partum care. Access to care as well as provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate care are community needs being addressed by the Healthy Baby Program.
Assessment

Maternal and child health plays an important role in the health of a community. Maternal, infant, and child health is a Leading Health Indicator of Healthy People 2020 with the goal of improving the health and wellness of mother, infants, and children. Healthy People 2020 objectives addressed by the Healthy Baby Program include: increase the proportion of pregnant women who receive early and adequate prenatal care, reduce the rate of fetal and infant death, reduce preterm birth, and increase the proportion of women giving birth who attend a postpartum care visit.

In early 2015, our hospital began exploring the need for pregnancy care for underserved women in our community. As a local community hospital with strong collaborative community partnerships, the need for the Healthy Baby Program was recognized by community organizations. Letters of support were obtained from key organizations. Primary and secondary data was obtained through multiple sources including community health needs assessments from local organizations, county health statistics and local data. Research was conducted on prenatal programs in the area and it was discovered that women were traveling out of our primary service area to a clinic approximately 20 miles away for prenatal care. Traveling outside of the community is not only challenging for pregnant women and their families, but there are serious concerns of risk to mother and baby during emergency situations. In addition to the travel, the fees for service could be an additional hardship for families. While the Healthy Baby Program is offered to all underserved women in our community, the targeted initial outreach was to the Latino population. The hospital service area is a very diverse community with a growing Spanish speaking population. The Healthy Baby Program gives women access to exceptional healthcare and bilingual patient navigation services right here in our own community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Area Zip Code</th>
<th>Latino population</th>
<th>Below poverty level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Service Area Zip Code**

- **Latino population**
  - 2012: 7.4%
  - 2016: 10.6%

- **Below poverty level**
  - 2012: 6.9%
  - 2016: 9.1%
**Intervention:**

In response to the Healthy People 2020 goals and identifying the need for the Healthy Baby Program for underserved women in our community, a multi-level intervention was developed and implemented. Initial efforts began at the grassroots level. Our community has a growing Spanish speaking population. Our newly hired bilingual (Spanish) patient representative visited local organizations to introduce the Healthy Baby Program to the community. Visits were conducted at nonprofit agencies and local churches, as well as health fairs and community events. Partnerships were formed with organizations that could help identify underserved women. The saying “if you build it, they will come,” proved to be true. Word quickly spread throughout the community and Program enrollment was growing quickly. The next step was to work closely with the OB practice to ensure patients were attending appointments. Our bilingual patient representative assisted patients with language barrier and helped patients navigate their care. Due to the increasing number of women enrolling in the Program, a second bilingual patient representative was hired in May 2016. The bilingual patient representatives serve as the first point of contact for women. They assist women with making OB appointments, getting prenatal bloodwork and ultrasounds, and navigation throughout the hospital. Bilingual patient representatives are certified medically and provide language interpretation to Spanish speaking persons. The bilingual patient representatives develop trust and mutual respect with the Latino population. Cultural sensitivity and language access are key factors in the success of the Program.

**Results**

The success of the Healthy Baby Program is due to a collaboration with the hospital, obstetrical practice, and supporting community organizations. Our first patient enrolled in the Healthy Baby Program in the summer of 2015. For the past five years, we have been able to provide quality prenatal, delivery, and post-partum care to women in our community thus improving maternal and child health. Over 1,150 women have enrolled in the Healthy Baby Program and there have been over 1,000 deliveries to date. By 2018, the number of women seeking prenatal and pregnancy care was rapidly increasing. As a result of the increasing number of referrals to the Program, it was necessary to limit the Program participants to those residing within our hospital’s primary service area.

Women who have participated in the Healthy Baby Program report positive experiences and outcomes. Patient testimonials have been collected and shared. One participant stated, “I was so happy that they have staff that speak my language and can understand me.” Another participant shared “Learning how to use a car seat was so helpful so I can keep my baby safe.” Another stated ‘ I was made to feel accepted and comfortable and felt like people truly cared about me and my baby.” The majority of referrals into the Healthy Baby Program are from family or friends who have been a part of it.

The Healthy Baby Program provides valuable information on how diverse our hospital community truly is. Women of different age groups, literacy levels, religions, languages, and cultures all need access to prenatal, delivery, and post-partum care. Access to care as well as
provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate care are community needs being addressed by the Healthy Baby Program.

As the Healthy Baby Program has evolved, other opportunities for pregnancy related health education have been identified.

1. The initial target population were Spanish speaking women, but as the Program has evolved, it was discovered that the Portuguese population in our community also needed care. To meet this need, one of our Spanish navigators also became proficient in Portuguese.

2. Additional birth preparation educational Programs have been added to provide women the knowledge and skills necessary to improve maternal and child health. Classes are facilitated by an experienced birth preparation instructor with an interpreter. The first birth preparation class for Spanish speaking women was piloted in 2018 with 12 women attending. The number of women attending nearly tripled in 2019. In addition, through a partnership with our pediatric provider, 66 families received car seat education and a car seat in 2018 and 67 in 2019. Through education, women receive the knowledge and skills necessary to care for themselves during pregnancy, childbirth, and beyond. Feedback indicates that transportation is often the barrier to attending classes, which is an issue being addressed in Healthy People 2020.

3. The incidence of gestational diabetes mellitus is significant in the Latino population and is reflected in our patient population. Our hospital provides outpatient diabetes education and a process was developed to provide diabetes education and support to expectant mothers. A registered nurse with diabetes expertise worked closely with a public health student pursuing a master’s degree to develop low literacy, culturally appropriate materials for education. To date 130 women have received education on gestational diabetes management.

4. Women who enroll in the Program also have the opportunity to meet with the financial counselors at the hospital to determine eligibility for insurance or charity care Programs. As a result of these meetings, some women have been able to obtain insurance for themselves during their pregnancy. Through quality improvement efforts and careful screening, the number of those who received health benefits increased by 12% from 2018 to 2019.
The Healthy Baby Program has proven to be sustainable. Processes are reviewed quarterly and adapted as necessary. Committed partners dedicated to improving community health are working together to meet the need of providing access to quality prenatal, delivery, and post-partum care of underserved pregnant women.

Adaptability

The Healthy Baby Program provides underserved women an opportunity to receive essential prenatal, delivery, and post-partum care. Similar programs can be replicated; however, a strong partnership between the OB/GYN provider, hospital and other community organizations are necessary to successfully meet the needs of any community.

Lessons can be learned from this initiative. Health literacy, language literacy and cultural competency for Spanish speaking patients must be considered and adapted to meet the needs of the participants. In addition to language interpretation, our bilingual patient representatives took on a navigator role; providing assistance with scheduling appointments, enrolling women in classes, and utilizing and referring to community resources. Additional bilingual staff was needed to keep up with the Program’s growth. Additionally, the use of our language line increased to meet the needs of the patients when the bilingual staff were not working. Many women outside of our service area were interested in the Healthy Baby Program so it became a priority to ensure we were meeting the health care needs of the pregnant women in our primary service area. The Healthy Baby Program initiative has been successful in providing access to prenatal, delivery and post-partum care for at risk populations in the primary service area. As we transition from Healthy People 2020 goals to Healthy People 2030 goals, maternal, infant, and child health remains a key indicator, reinforcing the need for this initiative.
1. Patient becomes pregnant
2. Patient makes contact with bilingual patient representative
3. Patient schedules appointment with OB provider
4. Prenatal visits (blood work ultrasounds & education)
5. Patient delivers baby
6. Patient schedules postpartum checkup with physician
Reference: