

TEAM APPROACH TO FIGHTING THE GROWING PROBLEM OF DIABETES

North Dakota applies technology to unite a widely scattered team

Public Health Problem

- The number of North Dakotans with diabetes is growing - even children are about thirty percent more likely to develop diabetes than they were just a few years ago.
- Diabetes is a leading cause of blindness, lower limb amputation, end-stage renal disease, and coronary heart disease.
- Tackling a statewide problem such as diabetes prevention and control demands effective, coordinated effort but North Dakota's limited program resources and long travel distances between population centers present a challenge.

Program

- With only a program director and epidemiologist assigned to the North Dakota Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, a creative approach was needed to establish an effective team for this program funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- With no evaluation staff, limited dollars to pay full-time staff and few available evaluation consultants in the state, the Program contracted with an experienced Virginia public health evaluation consultant to guide the development and monitoring of planning and evaluation.
- Other critical expertise is provided to the team by the chair of the Dakota Diabetes Coalition and the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Disease Management Coordinator. A volunteer from the Dakota Diabetes Coalition rounds out the team.
- To work effectively with team members in many different locations, the team uses conference calls and "Click to Meet" software that links computers in virtual meetings and permits visual contact while people work together.

Impact

- Using cost effective, virtual meeting technology and conference calls is helping North Dakota build a state partnership infrastructure to coordinate the work for diabetes prevention and control. Information transmitted between people is often nonverbal making the visual component of the meeting technology useful for getting the work done.
- The improved communication system also ensures continuity of operation in times of disaster or national emergency when people with chronic disease such as diabetes need special help.
- Regular evaluation of the diabetes team process has resulted in increased accountability, better coordination of the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program and improved capacity to adapt actions based on evaluation results.
- The Diabetes Prevention and Control Program has developed consensus on program outcomes by agreeing on a logic model as an underpinning for activities. The logic model will guide the revision of the North Dakota Diabetes Health System strategic plan in 2009.

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