

HOME VISITS HELP FARM WORKERS LIVE BETTER WITH ASTHMA

Bi-lingual educators teach clients to better utilize medicines and manage environmental triggers

Public Health Problem

- Many deaths, doctor visits and symptoms related to asthma can be prevented through effective use of medication, understanding of the causes and consequences of the disease, and reduction in environmental ‘triggers’ that cause asthma attacks.
- Community health clinics in rural, eastern Washington and Oregon experienced a significant increase in clients with asthma over a two year period as well as increases in hospital admissions and emergency department visits for this group – an indication that clients’ asthma was not well-controlled.

Program

- The Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic used funding from a Health Resources and Services Administration grant to establish the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic Asthma Project a home-visiting program employing bi-lingual, paraprofessional asthma educators to conduct home visits with residents who have asthma.
- Visits include education on the importance of using medicines and medical equipment correctly, following medical recommendations, and minimizing environmental triggers, such as dust mites and cigarette smoke, that make asthma worse.
- A recent grant from the Washington State Health Care Authority allowed partnering with a local school district to provide home education to parents of schoolchildren with asthma, and to improve in-school asthma management.

Impact

- This project documented positive results for clients who had *at least five home visits*:
 - A seventy percent reduction in hospital and emergency department visits due to asthma attacks for high risk clients
 - A reduction in exposure to environmental factors that contribute to asthma attacks by up to seventy percent
 - Students who participated in asthma education in the home had over fifty percent fewer absences than students who did not.
- The project reduced barriers to asthma education for their clinic clients with asthma, helping to reach a Healthy People 2010 national health objective to “reduce the number of deaths, hospitalizations, emergency department visits, school or work days missed, and limitations on activity due to asthma.”

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