



TAPP INTO

Success Story from Blue Cross Funded Organizations

AUGUST 2009

Tobacco Control Education and Youth Leadership Development – Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES)/Minnesota State University (MSU) Mankato Partnership Latino Students Tobacco Control Program

Program History

“Today, the program focuses not only on tobacco control issues, but has become a comprehensive leadership program in which Latino students develop their academic skills as well as gain a real life experience in how to design, develop, implement, and evaluate community interventions.”

Dr. José William Castellanos

Director of Family Centric Health Promotion Program, CLUES

For the 2008-2009 school year, CLUES and MSU Mankato Center for Latino Affairs built an innovative partnership to create the Latino Students Tobacco Control Program. The program trains Latino students at MSU Mankato to educate their peers and communities on the dangers of tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke. The program combines the expertise and resources of CLUES on tobacco control with the community contacts and student support of the Center of Latino Affairs. While the program was designed to educate MSU Mankato students about tobacco control, there were many successes that were achieved beyond the educational scope of the program. The program built leadership skills of the students involved as well as strengthened the work of the Center for Latino Affairs. Students were able to take ownership of the program and design culturally relevant presentations and outreach strategies for students, parents of college students, prospective students and community members.

In 2008, funding from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota was allocated to pilot an innovative culturally competent tobacco control program designed and implemented by the Latino college students which became the MSU-Mankato Latino Students Tobacco Control Program. Guadalupe Quintero, Director of the Center for Latino Affairs was a key part in the development of the program



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Latino Students Tobacco Control Program Participant

The program officially began on November 20, 2008, when twenty MSU Latino students attended a tobacco cessation training held at the CLUES Center in Minneapolis. Students learned about the history of tobacco control in Minnesota and the tobacco industry, historical perspectives of tobacco use, the harmful effects of tobacco second-hand smoke, and ethical dilemmas when reaching out to others. Students were also introduced to culturally relevant strategies when reaching out to the Latino community. For example, trainers emphasized the importance of humbleness and respect when talking to others. The training resulted in the students themselves designing messages, and presentations that were specific to their own experiences so that they could educate their peers on tobacco control. To maintain the education program, the students meet twice a month to plan activities and presentations and participate in education and outreach events monthly.

“Since I have been part of the Tobacco Control Program I have improved my knowledge about the effects of smoking. Before, I knew the basics of tobacco use and negative effects, but now after the tobacco training that we took as a team, I can back up myself with facts and valid information,” said one participant of the program.

Successes

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Latino Students Tobacco Control Program Participant

The Latino Students Tobacco Control Program has been effective not just in educating MSU Mankato students about tobacco, but also building leadership among the participants and strengthening the Center for Latino Affairs. The program is a useful model for how an outreach project can build the capacity of its partner organizations. The program has shown success in the following areas:

Outreach Events

The Latino Students Tobacco Control Program engaged members of the Chicano Latino American Student Association (CLASA) and The Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) to educate their peers about tobacco control. Through training, materials from CLUES and ongoing support from the Center for Latino Affairs, the participants created community-specific outreach strategies. Throughout the school year, the program grew from 20 to 46 trainers. As a result, the program was able to reach a variety of communities including parents of MSU Mankato students, prospective students, and community members. In fact, students in the program spoke at the Pan African Conference held at MSU,



Mankato on February 25-29, 2009. More than 200 Somali students from south central Minnesota attended this event. The conference committee wanted to include tobacco cessation workshops during the conference, noticing that as Somali youth are assimilating to the American culture the chances of becoming smokers increase, especially among girls. The MSU Tobacco Control Program offered three workshops throughout the conference with approximately 30 students at each workshop. Since its inception, the program has reached 500 students and community members.

Leadership Skills Built

Above and beyond the knowledge gained on tobacco, Ms. Quintero reported that students in the program developed their leadership and public speaking skills. In fact, one student mastered video software to create a digital video of his experience in the program. Students have taken leadership in their personal lives to address tobacco control. Many students, have talked with their fellow students in informal settings about the dangers of tobacco use and many have reported they are more critical of media portrayals of smoking.

Some students have even taken the initiative to advocate for clean indoor air policies in their housing. A student living in student housing for families successfully advocated for enforcement of her building's clean indoor air policy.

"I feel very aware of my surroundings and want to use my training to help control and prevent tobacco abuse. I have also used my training in my personal life. I live with my three-year-old daughter in an apartment complex that claims to be tobacco free, yet the hallway of the building smells like cigarette. Therefore, I recently started my petition to have the walls re-painted. There are several families in the building with young children. We can smell a strong tobacco odor in the hallways (including the walls and carpeting) throughout the building. This is unacceptable and the property owner needs to take responsibility and make necessary renovations to improve the quality of life for all tenants."

This program was able not only to prevent tobacco use among Mankato students through peer education and training, but helped students use their leadership skills to change their environment, to be true change agents in their communities.

Strengthen the Center for Latino Affairs & Increase Graduation Rates?

A key strength of the Latino Students Tobacco Program, is its integration with the existing programs of the Center for Latino Affairs. Because the Center for Latino Affairs is an important gathering place for Latino students at MSU Mankato, Ms. Quintero has a strong relationship with student groups. Ms. Quintero says that the funding from CLUES, which was provided through a contract with Blue Cross, provides flexible resources for the Center to build investment from students in the Center. The funding allows them to include more informal, community-building activities like group dinners. Among these group dinners was a parent appreciation event, where parents of students in the program came for a dinner to learn about their children's experience in college and hear what they have learned about tobacco control. Many Latino students in MN are the first members of their families to attend college. The college experience is new to them and having a Center where they can get support, encouragement and build self confidence to be successful and stay in school is essential to assure 100% graduation rates. To support this, the Center used funding for gift cards as thank-yous and incentives for student participation in the tobacco control program. The Center was also able to hire work-study students to help administer the program. One work-study student was able to stay in school because of her stipend with the Center for Latino Affairs.



“The Tobacco Control Program has provided us (CLASA) with many opportunities to develop fun activities. In addition, we have had the opportunity to travel to many places. During these trips our group has become more united and become more like a family,” said one student about the program. The program builds a sense of community, which is a culturally and linguistically appropriate strategy to help students deal with stress and avoid tobacco and other substance use.

Challenges – Building Interest



A key challenge in starting up the program was building interest among the students. Students who were not smokers asked why they would need to be part of a tobacco control program since they already were nonsmokers. Students who did smoke were concerned about whether they could participate. Ms. Quintero invited four students who she saw regularly at the Center to participate in the program. She also enlisted leaders of CLASA to recruit student for the program.

“In the beginning, most of the responses I received were ‘I don’t smoke. Why do I need this?’” said Ms. Quintero. “As students were seeing the impact and influences of smoking in their own lives, it became real to them.”

As an incentive for participation, Ms. Quintero gave gift cards at the end of the first training and in recognition for successful outreach events. Incentives helped students to get engaged in the program, while feeling a part of a group further deepened their investment. Other strategies that were effective in building group cohesion were opportunities to go to dinner together and having food at presentations. Foods that were available were healthy choices, with fruits and vegetables, which helped students to also learn more about nutrition. Along with being a tobacco control program, this program also served students as a support group, social outlet, and opportunity to learn about healthy eating.

A key part of the retention of student trainers, was empowering them to develop their own presentations and adapt the information they were receiving about tobacco control to a college environment. Students gathered to watch the Spanish-language television programs to analyze who is or isn’t smoking on the show and what messages are given about smoking. Now the students pay attention not just to the harm of tobacco, but also the cultural impact.

Lessons Learned

...by attending all the meetings related to tobacco they had become part of a support system that empowers them to grow in many positive ways. Trust and friendships alone among the group have developed and grown immensely because of it. With these results, there is no doubt that students will feel confident to go out to the MSU campus and its community, and inform them of what they have learned through the tobacco use preventions program.

From the 2008-2009 Report on the MSU Mankato Latino Students Tobacco Control Program

The Latino Students Tobacco Control Program has grown from a partnership for CLUES to educate the MSU Mankato community about tobacco control to a program that empowers MSU students to educate their communities. Through the development of the program, partners learned several key lessons:



Integrate Your Program with Existing Student Support Programs

According to Dr. Castellanos, Ms. Quintero was integral to the success of the program. Because the tobacco control program was housed within the Center for Latino Affairs, the partners could leverage the expertise of CLUES and the strong community building activities run by the Center. Support from CLUES allowed the Center to recruit additional students to all of its programs and reward students for their participation in tobacco education activities. Participation in the tobacco control program also helped the Center achieve its goals of reducing dropout rates and increasing student involvement in Center activities. Additionally, students could go to the Center to get referrals to cessation services. This was a win-win situation where the capacity of the Center to serve its students was increased and the reach of CLUES to the MSU Mankato student population was deepened.

Allow The Program to Adjust to The Students' Needs and Perspectives

A key lesson learned was to allow the program the flexibility to accommodate the perspectives of the students. At the end of the first training, Quintero asked the students to adapt the information they learned based on their own experiences. The students adjusted training materials to address situations that college students were likely to find themselves like restaurants and bars catering to students. They also looked at mainstream and ethnic entertainment and media that they and their peers enjoy and developed critical analyses of smoking on the shows. Employing strategies and presentations that they themselves designed increased the investment of students in the program.

At a training for high school students, the MSU Mankato student trainers replicated their own process for being educated and asked the high school students to create posters of what they learned during the training and how they would share that information with their peers.



Employ Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Approaches

One of the most important lessons learned was to ensure that all strategies were culturally appropriate. For example, all materials provided by CLUES were in both English and Spanish. Knowing that family played a key role in Latino students' lives, the program hosted a parents' appreciation dinner to connect the parents of MSU Mankato students with the tobacco control program.

The program also gave students the opportunity to look critically at ethnic media portrayal of smoking. During one dinner, students played the game "Loteria" (Bingo) and one student pointed out that even Loteria in an indirect way promotes smoking. He continued by pointing out how the Loteria game had "El Catrin" a male figure well-groomed posing with a cigar in his hand.

Another student noticed that the word "Catrin" translates to the word dandy, which means a well dressed man who is concerned with his elegant appearance. He stated that the picture of "El Catrin" might seem harmless, and represents high class, but it also sends the wrong message. Students articulated how the game Loteria, which is considered a family game, encourages smoking through subliminal messages. Many students mentioned that they have played this game since they were in elementary school, but never realized that many of the cards promote violence, drinking, and smoking. Several students shared that the information they have received about tobacco opened their eyes and now they can see many things from a different point of view.



Cross Cultural Collaboration Is Important and Easy to Achieve

The program which started at the Center for Latino Affairs was easily adjusted by the students to reach out to the Somali and African American communities. By having students become peer educators, they could see their role as leaders protecting communities from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. This type of collaboration creates community bonds which can then be used to promote not only individual changes, but university wide changes and ultimately community changes that can assure that all multiunit housing units, regardless of location can become smoke-free to protect all residents.

“At first I was more excited about having more resources for the center.” Said Ms. Quintero. “But now I am excited about the program and the students have so many ideas about improving it for the next year.”

Next Steps

The students are excited to be part of the program for the 2009-2010 school year. While they have gained knowledge about tobacco control, they have come into their own as leaders and change agents in their own communities. As they have been empowered to shape the content of the program's first year, they have even more ideas for the second year. As a result of the program, additional resources at MSU Mankato for a healthy nutrition program with a similar approach were allocated in 2009.

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CLUES receives training and technical assistance through the Technical Assistance for Priority Populations to Implement a Norm Change on Tobacco (TAPP INTO) program. The TAPP INTO Program is a comprehensive community-competent technical assistance and training program that supports community organizations working with African, African American, Latino, LGBT, and Southeast Asians in Minnesota. The goal of the TAPP INTO program is to build the capacity of these priority population-serving organizations in Minnesota and their emerging coalitions to implement successful tobacco control programs and policies and eventually reduce tobacco prevalence, exposure to secondhand smoke, and other tobacco disparities. This work is supported by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) as part of a health improvement initiative funded by tobacco settlement dollars that addresses root causes of preventable heart disease and cancer. Blue Cross' prevention efforts with high priority populations include a commitment to build community capacity to work on health promotion efforts.