

VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

HEALTH HEROES PROJECT OUTLINE

OBJECTIVES

- Mission
To encourage community leaders (CLs) to collaborate with the DOH and support its mission of preventative medicine, health promotion and protection, policy development and planning, and protection of life in case of disaster.
- Vision
To empower community leaders and members to work towards addressing health concerns of their own community in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Health.
- Additional goals
 - o Increase the Virgin Island community's engagement in healthy lifestyle promotion
 - o Create a system of communication for important health updates to reinforce efforts of the Department of Health
 - o Increase community trust between the government and the community
 - o Provide key basic health training that can increase access to essential health provider needs in areas lacking access to care
 - o Educate youth about healthy behavior by engaging them in schools

ACTION PLAN

1. Build lists of reliable community partners
 - a. Already started – 87 so far but many will need to be reached again
 - b. CLs should be available to meet once a month with at each meeting
 - c. **Main point: find out what health issues are most important to different communities**
 - d. Call to action
 - i. **Recruited CLs should be well known, connected, and trusted in their individual communities**
 - ii. **CLs should also be willing to teach messages to community members in their own community meetings and give feedback to the DOH about the community's response.**
 - iii. **CLs should agree to be reliably accessible for meetings at least once/month for 1-2 important health lessons and for possible emergent situations**
 - e. A complete CL list should be able to reach each community in the Virgin Islands but recruitment of reliable leaders should be welcome
 - f. Time frame: 1-2 months
2. Identify appropriate meeting times and locations
 - a. Should begin polling CLs as they are established on when and where is most convenient to have meetings.
 - b. Ideally, meetings between the DOH and CLs would occur once/month (frequency dependent on whether there are emergent health concerns to be addressed)

- c. Use either next major event island wide event or individually reach out to known entities where community leaders may be i.e. churches, gyms, radio personalities etc.
- d. Ideally CLs would meet at DOH but may be beneficial to use time at public events to host meetings
- e. Restaurants and other attractive venues should be used. Food can often be used as incentive.
- 3. Create consensus on best forms of communication within each community
 - a. Allow CLs to decide what communication format would be best i.e. radio, tv, posters, social media, etc.
 - b. Ask for feedback from CLs on whether or not messages are being received.

KEY DETERMINANTS INFLUENCING HEALTH HEROES SUCCESS

- SOCIAL
 - o Differences in ethnic backgrounds affecting reception of health messages
 - o Ethnicity of those delivering the message
 - o Interaction of CLs
- CULTURAL
 - o History of distrust of government organizations
 - o Conspiracy theories
 - o Language barriers
 - o Use of bush medicine
- ENVIRONMENTAL
 - o Difficulty in reaching certain parts of the islands
 - o Lack of enough resources or venues to host community meetings
- EDUCATIONAL
 - o Knowledge of health benefits
- POLITICAL
 - o Political will to encourage community self-investment

STAKEHOLDERS IN HEALTH HEROES

- Virgin Islands Department of Health
- Virgin Islands and U.S. Government
- Providers
- Community members
- Business owners
- Employers
- Media companies

POSSIBLE INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- Informational meeting dinners (partner with local)
- Free educational classes at major event i.e. jump up
 - o Fitness classes (Walk with a doc)
 - o Healthy food cooking classes (potentially sponsored by local restaurant)

- Basic lifesaving procedure classes i.e. CPR, epi pen usage, naloxone training
- Alternative medication education
- Chronic disease management
- Mosquito prevention
- Stress reduction strategies
- Mental Health

EVALUATION

- Success of the program will be most dependent on participation and feedback from the community in several categories
 - Understanding the health messages
 - Increasing knowledge of health messages
 - Willingness to participate more in HH
- Objectives measures such as obesity rates can be observed as well but that would have to be over an extended period of time.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- TV, radio, newspaper, social media advertisements requesting participants
- Personal relationships that DOH employees have
- Recruitment at major events with large HH kiosk

FUNDING SOURCES

- VI DOH
 - Commissioner Davis has secured funding for a community health workers (CHW) program through the DOH. Some of that fund can be used to sponsor HH events that are done in conjunction with the CHW program.
 - A budget should be created to present to Commissioner Davis which will allow funding for special events to take place
- Local business owners
 - Business and/or restaurants who want sponsorship at events can donate to a Private Contribution Fund at the DOH. A new ledger will be created titled Health Heroes. Contact Tatia Monell-Hewitt (tatia.monell-hewitt@doh.vi.gov)
- Private individuals
 - Can also donate to the private contribution fund under the HH ledger.

PROGRAM MAINTENANCE

- DOH champion(s) must be established once a year at the beginning of the year.
- Regular funding source must be established. Ideally not grant dependent.
- Continuous feedback from the community about the importance of the program is imperative.

SCALE-UP

- Initial pilot has started on St. Croix. Initial community focus should be in Christiansted then scale-up to Frederiksted and communities in between.
- Concurrent pilot can be done in St. Thomas, initially focusing on the most populous area like Charlotte Amalie then spreading out.
- This pilot should continue through the end of 2017.
- Goal is for continuous outreach and full scale incorporation of HH into VI DOH by 2018