

Public Health Outreach Project Description

Title: Houston HealthWays (formerly Information Access for Public Health Professionals)

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Organization: Houston Academy of Medicine—Texas Medical Center Library

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Objectives:

Project Goal: To improve health information services to public health professionals and consumers through an active outreach program.

Objectives:

- Develop an aggressive outreach public relations campaign to inform public health workers, staff of health agencies, and related consumers of the available health information products and services.
- Provide an outreach training program to reach the targeted community of practicing public health workers.
- Provide health information resources to public health professionals by coordinating and developing a public health web page with emphasis on Houston, Gulf Coast, and Texas information.

Target Audience:

The target audience is the professional public health community including staff from the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS), fire departments, police departments, public librarians, and consumers.

Needs assessment (methodology and results):

A focus group was held early in the project planning stage. Participants, who represented many local public health related agencies, were asked about specific informational needs. A base-line data survey was also distributed at the focus group meeting. The same base-line data survey was distributed to all professional staff at the HDHHS. Evaluation forms were distributed at all classes taught with respect to the project.

Since it is widely known that public health agencies rarely have adequate computer equipment and/or Internet access (which was also reflected in the focus group comments), we went beyond the project goals of purchasing computer equipment and Internet access for two HDHHS clinics. Instead, with project funds we were able to purchase equipment for all eight clinics. Classes have since been taught at each location. To further our effort, the HAM—TMC Library Outreach Librarian worked with the NN/LM SCR office to establish Internet Connectivity Sites in four other project partner sites. Finally, since we save a lot of project funds in the local taping of public service announcements (see below), we currently have a request in to the NN/LM SCR and NLM to use additional project funds to purchase equipment for 5 additional community—based organizations.

Intervention:

We have held monthly meetings of the self—appointed advisory committee, developed out of interest displayed by participants of the focus group. The advisory committee has two subcommittees, Web Development and Education.

To date, we have taught 16 classes/demos of the *Houston HealthWays* web site, including introductions to PubMed, MEDLINEplus, and other appropriate databases. Participants have included public health professionals, public librarians, and City of Houston Wellness committee members. We have also exhibited at two community—based health fairs.

Training and other materials developed:

We have used a number of different PowerPoint presentations, depending on the audience, length of presentation, availability of Internet connection, and venue. Most often, we present the classes/demos in a classroom with a hands—on approach. We have not developed any specific training aids.

Website (developed as part of project and how maintained):

Houston HealthWays (hhw.library.tmc.edu) was developed by Library staff with input from the Web Development subcommittee of the Advisory Committee. The subcommittee search for existing sites, while Library staff created lists of resources specific to the geographic area, such as a list of regional hospitals with links if available, or a list of free or low—cost health clinics. The section of the homepage that lists top health concerns was created as a result of concerns identified on the base—line data survey forms.

Library staff maintain the *Houston HealthWays* page. As the HAM—TMC Library becomes involved in other special projects, subpages are added to the main page. For example, the Library recently partnered with the American Library Association and the local PBS affiliate KUHT Channel 8 on promoting end-of-life education through the nationally broadcast *On Our Own Terms* series which aired in September. A page was added to *Houston HealthWays* which lists information on death, dying, funerals, palliative care, caskets, bereavement, and other issues dealing with these issues.

Evaluation (methodology and results):

We used the base—line data forms to guide our development of the *Houston HealthWays* web site and to help determine what to cover in classes for public health professionals.

Class evaluation forms were distributed at each presentation, and adjustments were made to classes reflecting comments made by attendees.

Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Presentations/Publications:

Little, Felicia. *Houston HealthWays* presentation at a kick—off event for the Texas Gulf Coast Healthy Communities Partnership

Halsted, Deborah & Barclay, Donald. *Houston HealthWays*, presented paper at the annual meeting of the South Central Chapter of the Medical Library Association, November 2000, El Paso, TX.

Partnerships:

Original partnerships were the HAM—TMC Library, the Houston Department of Health and Human Services, the Houston Public Library and the Harris County Public Library. Since the initial focus group, we have had participation at some level from:

City of Houston—Division of Emergency Management; Employee Wellness Advisory Committee; Finance and Administration; Police Department; Human Resources; Planning and Development; Public Works and Engineering; Parks and Recreation Department
Harris County—Hospital District; Office of Emergency Management
State of Texas—Department of Health; Department of Public Safety;
University of Texas Houston School of Public Health
Other—DePelchin Children’s Center; Chicano Family Center

Marketing:

Through the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS), two public service announcements (English and Spanish) were taped. Leonnel Castillo, Education Liaison to the Mayor of Houston, was the “star.” Mr. Castillo is a recognized Hispanic leader in the city. The PSAs have been airing on the City of Houston’s Municipal Channel. They will also be shown in waiting rooms of the HDHHS clinics.

Project funds were also used to produce a tri-fold project flier and magnets to be handed out at classes and demos. We also produced a rolodex card to be distributed at any outing, since they are much cheaper than the magnets.

Deborah Halsted served on the Texas State Planning committee, which presented a day—long session on public health issues in February 2000. Attendees came from all over the state and included both librarians, academicians, and health professionals.

Administrative issues:

Nothing to mention. I am sure it has helped that the NN/LM SCR lives in the HAM—TMC Library.

Challenges Faced:

- So many public health professionals, so little time.

- Lack of connectivity in public health agencies.
- Public health professionals do not have enough time to search for information, the patient load is much too heavy.

Were Project Objectives Met?

Yes.

Sustainability:

We have begun talking with Jeff Huber, PI of the University of North Texas project, about combining the two projects when NLM funding ends. Since both projects have reached out to the same population, just in two different geographic areas of Texas, we think that we could use the two projects as a joint model for the rest of the state. We plan to apply for local and state funds to sustain both projects.

Anecdotes or Other Observations: