

NIOSH Information Dissemination on the U.S.-Mexico Border

Background

NIOSH Office of Health Communication (OHC) is embarking on a pilot initiative to strengthen its communications activities with Latino and Latin American immigrant populations in the United States. The U.S.-Mexico border region is a unique environment in which many Latinos and Latin American immigrants live and work. Because of the long history of Latino and immigrant presence on the border, there are systems for service delivery that have developed in addition to traditional healthcare and other service institutions that attempt to address the particular needs of this population. The U.S.-México Border Health Commission (BHC), through Dr. Carmen Sánchez-Vargas, the CDC liaison to the BHC, has welcomed NIOSH participation and facilitated NIOSH exploration of opportunities for collaborations with organizations and institutions along the border. The General Manager for the U.S. Section of the BHC, Mr. Dan Reyna, has also offered strong support for NIOSH involvement on the border. The BHC is a joint program of the Department of Health and Human Services and Mexico's *Secretaría de Salud*. Given the many local assets of the U.S.-Mexico border region, NIOSH OHC sees the region as a promising area to begin concerted, organized, and coordinated efforts to reach Latino and Latin American immigrant workers with occupational safety and health (OSH) information.

In concert with researchers from EID and DSHEFS, three main objectives have been selected:

1. To develop innovative methods to provide OSH information to workers who do not regularly access traditional healthcare, service delivery, and health information institutions;
2. To test NIOSH OSH materials and products in new settings and with populations that NIOSH has not systematically reached in the past, including lower-literacy, non-English speaking, and socially marginalized people;
3. To evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of new vehicles for information dissemination to the above-mentioned populations.

Working with Mexican Consulates and local promotores programs

NIOSH's activities on the border will be concentrated on identifying appropriate formats and mechanisms for occupational safety and health information dissemination, developing, pretesting, producing, and disseminating the information products, and evaluating both the materials and the dissemination methods. The Border Initiative will have a dual focus: the El Paso border area, primarily working through the already-existing, strong network of *promotores*, and the *Ventanillas de Salud* Program in Mexican Consulates on the border and elsewhere. The strengths of this approach lie in working with local experts and within information dissemination structures that are well-established, accepted, and respected by the immigrant communities we hope to reach. The two programs will be mutually-reinforcing, as many of the clients served in the Consulates also access information, community resources, and healthcare through the *promotores*.

Ventanillas de Salud Program: Background

There are 12 VDS programs at Mexican Consulates around the U.S. Nationally from 2003-2006, the VDS programs provided direct services to 500,000 Consulate clients and had a budget of \$2.7 million. The VDS program estimates their reach at 1.5 million people across the U.S., based on the assumption that for every person contacted directly, the information is shared with two family members or friends. The programs fall within the Mexican Department of External Relations. Each consulate signs a Memorandum of Understanding with a fiscal agent (usually a hospital, CBO, or foundation), which is renewed yearly. The Mexican government contributes a small amount of funding (around \$30,000/site/year) and the fiscal agent is responsible for raising the rest of the funding through grants or other sources. Each fiscal agent has a program coordinator who establishes a program of work with other agencies to provide materials, information, presentations, and workshops. The national coordinator for the VDS programs is a member of the consular staff in New York City. Each Consulate trains *promotoras* and other service providers about the Mexican health system so that they understand the client perspective and will be able to refer clients to services in Mexico.

The activities at all VDS programs fall within three categories: Information, Education, and Referral. There is no specific written curriculum to follow, but there are certain requirements that each VDS program must meet. The fiscal agent provides the national coordinator with a quarterly report of activities and number of people served. There are plans to open ten more VDS programs in the near future.

Ventanillas de Salud Program: Opportunities

- Collaborate with the VDS Program in El Paso to develop an occupational profile of the Consulate client population by adding occupation questions to their standard intake interview and assisting them with data entry and analysis. This information will be useful in prioritizing current NIOSH materials for reformatting for this distribution channel and in choosing topics for new materials creation.
- Collaborate with VDS program to develop and pretest new and reformatted materials for the Consular audience.
- Provide information and materials (e.g., written, visual, training) to VDS *promotores*.

El Paso Opportunities for Community Engagement

- Collaborate with the Colonias Program to develop OSH training materials for *promotores*, to be delivered during one of the semi-annual trainings for *promotores* in El Paso.
- Where appropriate, collaborate with the Colonias Program and other *promotores* groups to develop, produce, and disseminate occupational safety and health information to *promotores* for their clients.