

# Parish Health Promoter Program

A Collaborative Project of  
Providence Portland Medical Center,  
Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and  
Catholic Charities' El Programa Hispano

The Parish Health Promoter Program is a volunteer program that seeks to build healthier communities through parish-based health promotion and leadership training in the Latino immigrant community. The program uses the techniques of *popular education* to build on the life experiences of lay leaders and support them in reaching their goals for a healthier community.

Based on similar models from Latin America, the parish health promoter program seeks to create relationships between the Latino community, local churches and health care providers. Trained volunteers disseminate information on health and health services and serve as liaisons between the community and the health delivery system. Parish health promoters (known as *promotores de salud de la iglesia* in Spanish) build on the strengths of the parish community to establish trust and confidence that allows individuals to receive the care and services they need.

## Recruitment and Training

The majority of Catholic parishes with Spanish-language masses in the Portland, Oregon metro area participate in the program. Training courses are held each fall on alternating sides of the metro area each year. The 15-week (60 hour) extensive training course is held in Spanish with Spanish-speaking instructors who utilize popular education methodology.

## Role of Health Promoters

After completing their initial training, parish health promoters continue to meet monthly as a group and receive continuing



Stroke education



Hands-on training for parish health promoters



Heart health event at parish



Health fair at Mexican Consulate



Food safety class



Kids' nutrition classes



Family served by Parish Health Promoters



Race For Your Health

education and ongoing support. They plan and carry out events within their parishes, depending on the interests and needs of their church communities. They work with parishioners and community members one-on-one to refer people to health care and social service resources. Some examples of parish health promoter activities include:

- Health fairs
- Classes and presentations on health topics after Mass
- Health information tables after Mass
- Referrals to clinics
- Referrals to social services (food, housing, education, immigration services, clothing, prenatal support, and more)
- Helping people fill out forms
- Providing transportation to medical appointments
- Providing interpretation for medical appointments
- Supporting women during childbirth
- Visiting people with chronic diseases
- Providing emotional support
- Helping families locate resources for health care bills
- Providing tours of hospital for Spanish-speaking patients

Where there is a parish nurse working in the congregation, the parish health promoters collaborate with the parish nurse to plan and organize events and activities as part of a health ministry. Program staff and volunteers provide a valuable feedback loop to the health system in terms of cultural competency and services to the poor and vulnerable.

## Outcomes

Parish Health Promoters complete monthly reports of their activities including number of people served and hours served. More than 7,000 people are served each year by parish health promoters across the Portland metro area.

For more information about the Parish Health Promoter Program please contact:

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