



SUCCESS STORY

Hospitals Become More Patient Friendly

A new customer service culture improves patient care



Photo: USAID/Maria De Moya

Jacinta Morla and her granddaughter wait in the recently remodeled waiting room at Alejo Martinez Hospital in Ramón Santana, Dominican Republic.

“People feel that we treat them better now,” says Dr. Leonardo Félix, director of Francisco Gonzalvo Hospital. “Now they know where to find the information they need.”

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Patients walking into Alejo Martinez Hospital in Ramón Santana, a town near the southern coast of the Dominican Republic, are greeted by a sunny waiting room and friendly staff. When they ask for their file by number, name, or ID, it is retrieved right away. In the waiting room, a video explains patients' rights.

These are some of the many improvements in this public hospital since it opened a customer service office. Thanks to USAID assistance, 14 hospitals like this one in five provinces now provide better, more efficient services with well-trained staff. They have remodeled waiting rooms, put up suggestion boxes, and trained staff to provide improved patient care and customer service. New signs help patients find their way around more easily, and employees have learned how to use computers.

Moreover, the hospitals have updated record-keeping systems. Previously, finding a patient's file meant sorting through thousands of files. “We would find one person with an assigned case number, and then we'd find three more people with the same case number,” explains Dr. Ana Gomez of Francisco Gonzalvo Hospital. After improving their record-keeping system, the number of files at Francisco Gonzalvo fell from 93,000 to 27,000. An efficient filing system means that doctors now have all the information they need at their fingertips, helping them provide the most accurate diagnosis and the best treatment.

Patients have noticed the improvements. At Alejo Martinez Hospital, Jacinta Morla, a resident who has been using the hospital all her life, is very impressed with the new approach to patient care. “It is always clean,” she says, “the hospital has changed for the good. Now it's wonderful.”

USAID continues to help hospitals the Dominican Republic's eastern region improve infrastructure and services. The changes have been noticed and appreciated by everyone, including medical professionals from other hospitals, who are now looking at the USAID-assisted hospitals as a model to replicate.