

**Vermont**

**Vermont Women's Clinics: A Big Draw**

**Public Health Problem**

*Ladies First*, Vermont's WISEWOMAN and Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, is run by the Vermont Department of Health (VDH). *Ladies First* offers Cardiovascular Health Improvement Program (CHIP) clinics coordinated by the WISEWOMAN program. These clinics serve people who do not have a primary care physician and connect them with medical and other resources to meet their heart health needs in 12 communities across the state.

**State Example**

The Vermont Department of Health works with Northwest Medical Center (NMC) to offer WISEWOMAN services at the CHIP clinics. About 25% of *Ladies First* clients go to the CHIP clinics to be part of the WISEWOMAN program. NMC nurses screen the women for heart disease risk factors. A health department nutritionist talks with each woman about her screening results and helps her set goals for changes in lifestyle behaviors that might lower her risk for heart disease. Each woman receives an incentive, such as a pedometer or cookbook, to help her meet her goals. Referrals for other community services are made for women who need them.

**Implications and Impact**

Cardiovascular Health Improvement Program clinics offer cardiovascular health screenings and lifestyle interventions to more than 350 women each year. There are many examples of success stories from the Vermont program, including the following. Mary Carroll came to a CHIP clinic in 2005. Both of her parents had heart disease, so she knew she had to take better care of her health. She had joined Weight Watchers, and now she wanted to be screened for heart disease as well as high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels. Getting free services was a plus, and she also liked it that the CHIP clinic was for women only. For Mary, it was "calmer than other doctors' offices and more relaxing."

Mary weighed 220 pounds when she started. The *Ladies First* staff helped her set goals to improve her health. They supported her efforts to lose weight. She learned how to make healthy food choices and became more active. She also worked with other community resources to support her goal to become healthier.

Mary now weighs 150 pounds. Three or four times each week, she rides a bike, swims, ice skates, or does something else to be active. She has been able to stop taking several medicines, including those for blood pressure and cholesterol control. She is determined to keep her heart healthy so she can live a long, active life. For Mary, the changes she has made are "for a lifetime."