

**California**

**Promoting Physical Activity for Latina Women in California**

**Public Health Problem**

Getting WISEWOMAN clients in Los Angeles County to be physically active is a challenge because of barriers such as having to work long hours, lack of transportation and child care, and having little time in the day for themselves.

**State Example**

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation *Healthy Parks* program's aim is to improve the health of county residents by promoting parks as places to be active. The Mid-Valley Comprehensive Health Center shares this goal. Rita Singhal, WISEWOMAN Program Manager, contacted the parks and recreation site closest to the health center about working together. The park has many options and Ms. Singhal decided that aerobics classes would be a good choice for the WISEWOMAN clients. Mid-Valley agreed to pay the \$2 per class charge for women to attend.

Clients are told about all the things to do at the county park nearest to the health center and most of the client's homes. They are offered a punch card that allows them to go to 10 aerobics classes. Women who do not have cars can take the bus to the park. Women who live closer to another site are told about free or low-cost options at the park closest to their home.

The Mid-Valley staff reports that nearly 75% of the women are going to the classes. Many bring family members and friends with them because the \$2 cost is so low. It gives them a chance to spend time together doing something fun that is also healthy. The park has activities for children, so the women (many of whom are single parents) can bring them without having to get child care. It is likely that increasing the women's level of physical activity will also help the whole family become more active.

**Implications and Impact**

In 2006, Mid-Valley provided WISEWOMAN screening services to more than 320 women. One participant, Dora Roman, decided to bring her adult daughter with her to the aerobics classes. Going together helps them support each other and makes them want to continue the classes. Dora lost 11 pounds and lowered her cholesterol by 44 points. Being able to go to the classes helped improve her health and gave her the chance to spend time with her daughter doing something fun and healthy.

Another WISEWOMAN client, Maria de Jesus Tellez, says she loves going to the aerobics classes. She has a very helpful family who takes her to class. She has inspired her family so much that they formed a family walking group. Maria lost 6 pounds in 2 months, and now her blood pressure is normal. Her granddaughter also has lost weight because the family is walking together.

**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."