

SUMA/Orchard Social Marketing, Inc.
Final Report on Pilot Project
WIC Breastfeeding Promotion Outreach Campaign
Targeted to African Americans

Executive Summary

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) piloted a breastfeeding campaign targeted to African American women in Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange and Hardin counties. National and state research shows that African Americans are less likely to breastfeed than other ethnic groups. In the Texas WIC population, average breastfeeding rates are: Caucasian 59.2%, African American 47.7%, Hispanic 68.1%, and other 67.8%. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding and ultimately to increase breastfeeding rates among African American WIC participants. The pilot campaign time period was January 2004 through September 2004. WIC conducted the pilot project to test the effectiveness of campaign elements and strategy before launching the campaign statewide.

Campaign elements included radio and television advertising as well as gift bags distributed to physicians' offices and hospitals to offer to African American patients expressing interest in breastfeeding. The bags were designed to contain the following items:

- ◆ Brochures promoting the benefits of breastfeeding, targeted to pregnant women
- ◆ Brochures targeted to their mothers and partners promoting the benefits of breastfeeding and describing how to offer support
- ◆ A refrigerator magnet touting the benefits of breastfeeding
- ◆ A baby bib with the message *Breast Milk: 100% Natural Ingredients*

Additional collateral print materials included two office posters featuring an African American woman with her baby and a promotional message from a female African American health-care provider. A variety of community-outreach activities during the time the campaign spots were aired augmented the campaign messages. During the pilot, WIC offices throughout the region also displayed posters and distributed brochures to pregnant African American women at certification. Selected physicians' offices in the region received a recommended protocol for discussing breastfeeding with expectant mothers, along with the breastfeeding gift bag and the posters. Hospitals received posters and gift bags to distribute to mothers who said they were going to breastfeed.

Methodology

SUMA/Orchard Social Marketing, Inc. was contracted to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign through pre- and post-campaign research. Campaign research included pre- and post-campaign interviews with 15 health-care providers at physicians' offices and hospitals that participated in the campaign; interviews with WIC staff in Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange and Hardin counties; and one-on-one in-depth interviews with 43 WIC clients during pregnancy and after giving birth about their infant feeding choices and their exposure to campaign elements. This report features a comparison of baseline and post-campaign findings.

A random sample of 150 pilot-area African American WIC participants also took part in shorter telephone interviews conducted during August 2004 to determine their recall of receiving campaign print materials while attending WIC certification. Respondents were selected from a universe of 600 African American WIC participants who were pregnant and certified at WIC during the time period of the campaign. Of the sample, 65% (n=97) were from Beaumont, 33% (n=50) from Port Arthur, and 2% (n=3) from Orange.

Summary Findings

Heightened awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding. In post-campaign interviews, women were more likely to say that one of the reasons breastfeeding is best for your baby is that it can make your baby smarter as well as healthier. They were also more aware that breastfeeding can help them lose weight. All three messages are stressed in the campaign advertisements and materials.

Recall of campaign advertisements and materials. Of the 43 WIC clients participating in in-depth interviews, 50% remembered hearing the radio advertisements and 48% remembered seeing the television commercials. Participants indicated a high recall of the breastfeeding promotional posters, displayed in WIC offices, local hospitals, and participating physicians' offices. The poster featuring the mother and her infant was remembered by 74% of all participants, and the poster featuring a female African American doctor was recalled by 37%.

Attitude shifts noticed by health-care providers and WIC staff. A majority of health-care providers and WIC staff reported a noticeable change in African American patients' attitudes toward breastfeeding. They not only reported that more pregnant African American patients expressed an interest in breastfeeding,

but also noticed a marked difference in the number and types of questions that patients asked about breastfeeding. They often expressed the opinion that this change was sparked by the campaign's television and radio advertisements. Many remarked that the most notable change in attitude, surprisingly, was among African American teen mothers, who generally have shown little interest in breastfeeding.

High quality of materials. WIC staff said the brochures distributed at clinics were especially well-received because of the quality of the materials. They also praised the campaign approach of providing specific materials for fathers and grandmothers and indicated that they had noted that these were appreciated by the target audiences.

About half of telephone-survey respondents recalled receiving materials at WIC. More than half (53%) of telephone-survey respondents remembered receiving campaign brochures at WIC. Of those, 52% recalled a WIC staff member reviewing brochures with them, although this varied by clinic (48% at the Beaumont clinic, 28% at the Port Arthur clinic). Only 19% and 28% remembered receiving the brochures for their mothers and partners, respectively, but 79% of those who did receive the brochures passed them on to the intended recipients.

Incomplete distribution of campaign materials. Some physicians' offices did not receive the complete set of materials. At other offices, only a few staff members were aware that the materials were available to distribute to patients. Hospital staff reported that they gave the gift bags to all African American women who expressed an interest in breastfeeding. However, very few of the 43 WIC in-depth study participants recalled receiving the gift bags, associated items, or brochures.

Mixed distribution of campaign materials. Some physicians' offices and hospitals that did distribute the materials mixed them with promotional items from formula and other baby-product companies in bags they normally distribute to pregnant patients. Physicians' offices received some campaign materials separately and added them to their existing gift bags. Researchers noted that at least one health-care provider office produced a box of unused campaign gift bags; staff said they had received the materials but had been uncertain how to use them and had simply mixed them in their own version of a gift bag.

Need for breastfeeding support at the hospital. While a majority of women were open to breastfeeding, complications at the hospital often created unforeseen barriers. Of the 43 participants in one-on-one pre-and post-campaign interviews,

three-fourths breastfed, planned to breastfeed, considered breastfeeding, or fed their babies both breast milk and formula. Of these, 37% did not breastfeed because of complications at the hospital, such as an unexpected Caesarian section, pain, inability to get the baby to latch on correctly, or a last-minute change of mind. These findings indicate that a large number of African American women are willing to breastfeed but need additional support at the hospital.

Conclusions

While it is difficult to prove that behavior change occurred strictly because of a nine-month media campaign, reports from health-care providers and WIC staff substantiate a notable attitude change in the target population. In addition, from November 2003 to August 2004, breastfeeding rates had risen from 30.8% to 40.8% in Hardin County and from 15.4% to 23.4% in Orange County based on Texas WIC breastfeeding initiation rates among African American women, further evidence of the campaign's effectiveness.

The campaign's impact may have been weakened by the fact that WIC staff gave the brochures only to women who said they were going to breastfeed rather than to all pregnant African American women certified at WIC, as stated in the protocol. Incomplete distribution of the gift bags by physicians should also be taken into consideration as findings are reviewed.

As the campaign moves forward, WIC may want to prioritize spending on media, paying close attention to strategic radio placement on local hip-hop stations that appeal to young African Americans, as well as on gospel stations. Gift bags should be distributed at WIC offices and possibly hospitals, rather than doctors' offices, though doctors should continue to be included with an announcement about the campaign and posters for their offices. To increase knowledge and excitement about the campaign, WIC staff and health-care providers need a personalized campaign kickoff along with a protocol for use. This could occur in regional or local gatherings to promote the campaign to WIC staff and hospital staff. Occasional follow-up should monitor their efforts.