

Final Report

Name and address of reporting institution:

Grillo Health Information Center

4715 Arapahoe Avenue, Boulder, CO 80303

Project Title: Grillo Senior Center Outreach Project

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Publicity:

The Grillo Health Information Center has made numerous presentations throughout the community, particularly targeted to senior populations regarding expansion of this Senior Center Project. Examples include presentations to the Har Hashem congregation, to a Parkinson's Support Group, and to staff of CareConnect of Boulder and other non-profit organizations. Our volunteer researchers have responded to on-going requests for evidence-based health information from these groups, often comprised of elderly individuals.

The Grillo Health Information Center has worked collaboratively with other community organizations to reach more senior citizens, including publishing health education activities in the local Daily Camera. Each month the Grillo Center writes an article on a current and relevant health topic discussing the latest health information and resources regarding the topic. This is published as an on-going column. The Grillo Center has also coordinated public health presentations with local Channel 22 television at a Senior Retirement community. We also have broadcast public service announcements through Audio Information Network of Colorado. The Grillo Center held a community forum at one of our senior outreach locations on the H1N1 virus. This event was publicized at multiple senior center locations and retirement communities (both independent living residences and assisted living facilities). A letter to the editor of the local newspaper was submitted but not published. We also subscribed to MyTown News with listings of some activities. The Grillo Health Information Center submitted photos and materials to Boulder Magazine for publication this Fall.

Other accomplishments:

The Grillo Health Information Center Senior Outreach Project has enabled expansion beyond the initial senior center location to other senior locations throughout the

community. The new locations are an outgrowth of the efforts and success of the initial NLM funded project.

By our expanded presence in the Golden West and Frasier Meadows Retirement Communities we were able to serve the health information access needs of these senior populations. Additional partners, and interest, have emerged. For example, a physician and a physical therapist in one facility wish to explore creative ways to market to and attract resident seniors to increased health information and health care access. Another facility is targeting outreach regarding Grillo Health Information Center services to family members of senior residents. Working relationships have been enhanced and have opened doors to new opportunities regarding collaboration and outreach ideas.

The Grillo Health Information Center has established a formal Memorandum of Understanding between our organization and the well-established CareConnect organization that provides medical transportation for vulnerable and low-income seniors. Grillo Center services are made available prior to or after medical appointments.

We have also enhanced our web-site functionality to allow easy input of health questions from the public. We have trained our volunteers to the new application tools and are refining our procedures to ensure consistency in how we serve seniors and others needing assistance.

Target audience:

The needs of our target population have not changed during the course of this project. We have found similar target populations in three different senior communities all of whom have needs identified in the initial needs assessment survey we conducted prior to the start of this project. We have found that the Grillo Health Information Center volunteer, in one-on-one confidential interaction, is able to provide caring support to help the senior citizen frame the health question, and understand exactly what information they need. We find we are able to establish trust and personal connections that are meaningful for both the patron and the volunteer. In the initial stages of this project at the West Senior Center, we have found that some seniors were reluctant to admit they need our services, perhaps because the visibility of other seniors was notable. By connecting to our target population in retirement communities, we are learning that to engage the resident population as much as or even more than the administration itself, is extremely important. We believe that the services we provide at these retirement communities, basically the home environment, are more effective. The more introductory activities in which we engaged, to help seniors understand and trust our intentions, the more effective we have been in establishing a welcoming presence and providing individual services.

The Senior Center Outreach Project has allowed us to learn these lessons as we grow and serve more and more vulnerable populations. It has also helped us focus on health literacy as a primary goal. The University of Colorado has engaged with us on a project to demonstrate how health literacy impacts individuals and costs. We are excited by the

outgrowth of initial efforts to serve seniors who demonstrated the need for more reliable health information, to others who also struggle with similar needs and who are generally under-served.

Goals, Outcomes, Objectives:

During the duration of the Grillo Senior Center Outreach Project, we have asked patrons to evaluate the effectiveness of our services and to provide some voluntary demographic information. We have analyzed the feedback from these formal evaluations. Ninety-seven percent of those who responded rated the quality of our services as excellent or good. Seventy-five percent of those we serve in the entire community are considered senior citizens. Eighty percent rate themselves as low-income. These are significant indicators of the value of Grillo Health Information Center to the more vulnerable populations in our community. It has helped us plan for, and implement, targeted outreach projects in particular neighborhoods. By taking our services to where populations reside or to their familiar environments, we are better able to meet their needs. Trust is a critical factor in making our resource available. We learned this early in the Senior Center Outreach Project. We also learned that our pace for progress does not necessarily reflect that of the population we are trying to serve, and that time is an important factor in building relationships and credibility.

The overall objectives of the project have remained consistent. We are still making evidence-based health information available to senior populations and increasing the number of underserved seniors who are educated about health care, nutrition, medications, and alternative treatment options.

We have found that our efforts to reach the more vulnerable, under-served senior population has expanded as a result of this project. This project has certainly introduced health information services to more seniors. Although we do not have hard outcome data on improvements to health literacy, we believe we are making a difference. The collaboration with the University of Colorado is intended to establish data that shows a direct relationship to Grillo Health Information Center and health literacy. The project is intended to develop metrics and outcome data in order to demonstrate the effects of our services on health and on health literacy, and on reduction of health care costs.

Evaluation:

The Grillo Health Information Center has been planning how best to obtain specific outcome data on the impact of our services. The current collaboration with the University of Colorado, among staff, and with our Board of Directors will lead to the collection of data regarding the type, number, methodology and frequency of questions to ask of those we have served. As we begin to finalize these efforts, we believe we will be able to capture important health literacy data regarding outcomes that have eluded us to this point.

We also provide the opportunity to every patron to give us formal, anonymous feedback through our Patron Evaluation Survey. It is an easy, straightforward way for seniors to inform the Grillo Health Information Center of the experiences, benefits, and concerns they have. Our analysis of the evaluations has provided valuable information to help us better understand this population and to refine our services.

The Grillo Center has implemented a quality review process for all research conducted by our volunteers. Four of our experienced researchers have been trained to provide this review oversight. This has helped assure that the health information we provide to patrons is thorough, accurate, and responsive.

The Boulder Community Hospital Medical Librarian provides on-the-job training as well as materials and resources to assist our volunteers in providing the highest quality health information research services.

Impacts and Observations:

Many seniors have verbally expressed their gratefulness for our services. As new individuals learn about and access the Grillo Health Information Center for health questions, we continue to receive positive feedback. We worked closely with the Boulder County Aging Services Division on a Caregiving Symposium to help identify and offer resources to those needing attendant care and those caregivers who seek to better understand the needs of their clientele and family members.

Our connection to retirement communities has helped solidify the Grillo Health Information Center as a valued and respected resource for trustworthy health information and has opened doors to greater prominence and outreach among under-served and vulnerable populations.