

FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ACCESS: REACHING OUT TO LOW INCOME LATINOS IN THE USA

^{1,2}Sofía Segura-Pérez, ^{1,2}Grace Damio, ²Amber Hromi, ^{2,3}Rafael Pérez-Escamilla



¹Center for Community Nutrition, Hispanic Health Council, Hartford, CT, USA, ²Connecticut Center for Eliminating Health Disparities Among Latinos, USA, ³Yale School of Public Health, CT, USA

Abstract

Introduction: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is the largest federal program for the prevention of hunger and food insecurity in the USA.

Goal: The main purpose of the SNAP Outreach Program at the Hispanic Health Council is to increase awareness of and participation in this program among low-income Latinos living in Connecticut.

Strategies: The program conducts outreach using a social marketing framework by conducting grassroots outreach, a media campaign and the development of educational materials. The program's social marketing efforts include: advertisements placed in public buses and Latino mass media channels such as radio, TV, printed media, and the development of two fotonovelas and a soap opera. The program also assists individuals with the application process.

Results: The evaluation of the mass media campaign indicated high coverage (78%) and public satisfaction with the campaign (70%-80%), and a positive impact on SNAP applications. Since 2005, the program has reached thousands of clients with information about SNAP. Funded by the USA Department of Agriculture.



Outreach Activities

- During fiscal year 08/09 staff from the program visited 619 locations within the targeted towns, distributing a total of 51,841 printed materials about SNAP. In many instances, these materials were distributed at community events where one-on-one SNAP education was also offered.
- Educational presentations about SNAP eligibility and benefits are conducted among staff and clients of agencies providing services to low income individuals.
- During fiscal year 08/09 the program reached 6,866 individuals through one-on-one and group presentations.
- Since 2005, the program has helped about 1,700 clients with their SNAP applications.



Program staff conducting a prescreening for a client and helping her to fill out a SNAP application



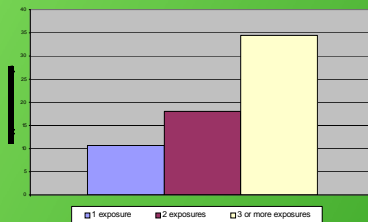
Program staff delivering a presentation at an "English as a Second Language" class



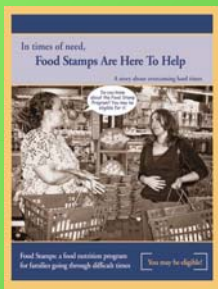
SNAP Banner and bus ad in Spanish

Media Campaign

In 2005, a comprehensive media campaign was run using several social marketing strategies that included: Public service announcements on local Spanish and English language radio stations, bus ads, a banner hung outside the Hispanic Health Council, and distribution of flyers. Findings from this evaluation showed a positive relationship between the number of exposures to campaign materials with the likelihood of applying for food stamps.



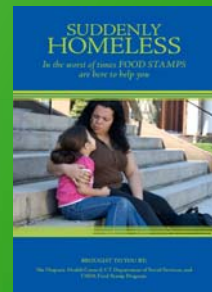
The greater the number of campaign materials respondents reported being exposed to, the more likely they were to apply for food stamps after the campaign. This relationship was statistically significant.



The main goal of "In Times Of Need" fotonovela is to increase awareness and debunk myths about food stamp eligibility, it targets low income Hispanic families

Educational Materials

- HHC uses the fotonovela format as a culturally relevant tool for SNAP community based education.
- Fotonovelas are very popular in Latin America. They are similar to a comic book, with photographs in place of drawings, and often involve a romantic story.
- Fotonovelas are easy to read and attract audiences with low literacy levels.



The main goal of the "Suddenly Homeless" fotonovela is to debunk myths about homelessness and food stamps eligibility

CONCLUSIONS

- A culturally appropriate social marketing framework has been very effective in reaching low income Latinos with SNAP information and education
- HHC outreach staff has been essential for translating the successful outreach into increased SNAP applications