



# Community

## *Partnerships between Catholic Charities and Catholic Health Care Organizations*

**L**ike other health care organizations in the United States, Catholic health care facilities are developing new relationships with a wide array of partners to extend their ministry and to improve efficiency, coordination, and quality of care.

In forming these partnerships, Catholic-sponsored organizations may have an advantage over others. Through Catholic Charities and other social service programs, the Catholic Church in the United States is the largest provider of human services. In addition, the church's network of almost 20,000 parishes enables health care organizations to reach into communities where little infrastructure exists. The current movement toward integration of community-based health and social services creates opportunities for church-sponsored organizations to work together as never before.

*Health Progress* publishes an ongoing series of case studies of such partnerships, hoping they might serve as models for those creating integrated systems of care. These case studies of Catholic Charities agencies and Catholic health organizations were prepared by the Catholic Health Association as part of *New Covenant*, an initiative designed to promote collaborative efforts of the Catholic health ministry at the national and regional levels.

Here is another case study. *Health Progress* will present others in future issues.

**If your health care organization is collaborating with a Catholic Charities agency in your area, we would like to know about it. Please contact Julie Trocchio by phone at 202-296-3993 or by e-mail at [jtrocch@chausa.org](mailto:jtrocch@chausa.org).**

# Networks

## Parish Health Promoter Program/*El Programa de Promotores de Salud de la Iglesia* Portland, OR

### Organizational Structure

The program is cosponsored by Providence Portland Medical Center (PPMC) and El Programa Hispano, Catholic Charities of Portland's outreach program to Spanish-speaking area residents. Hispanic Ministries of the Archdiocese of Portland and the University of Portland School of Nursing also participate.

### Goals of Affiliation

The program's overall goal is to increase access to health care among the Spanish-speaking residents of Multnomah County, OR, in which Portland is the major city.

### The Project

Demographers estimate that half of the 300,000 Catholics in the Portland diocese are Spanish-speaking. In 1996 a needs assessment study of one Catholic parish revealed that many Hispanic residents hesitated to seek health care because of perceived cultural, social, and gender differences between them and local health care providers.

In May 2000, PPMC and El Programa Hispano, borrowing a concept that has proved effective in Latin America, launched the Parish Health Promoter Program/*El Programa de Promotores de Salud de la Iglesia* in two of Portland's predominantly Hispanic parishes. To facilitate the program's overall goal, its leaders developed four specific ones:

- Leadership development
- Increased awareness of community health services
- Dissemination of health-related information
- Identification and reduction of barriers that keep people from receiving appropriate care

The program recruited 32 volunteers from the Catholic parishes to serve as "parish health promoters." The volunteers, who recently completed a 15-week series of classes on illness, health, and local health care services (the class met for four

hours on Saturdays), are now developing outreach plans for their neighborhoods.

The health promoters will disseminate in their parishes the health information they learned in the health classes. Some will speak to school assemblies; others will set up information tables after services at area churches. All will emphasize hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and other illnesses affecting the Hispanic community.

The program's leaders estimate that the health promoters will reach from 800 to 1,000 people a year with their message.

### Governance Structure

An informal advisory group governs the program. PPMC and El Programa Hispano have an agreement whereby the former pays the program director's salary and the latter provides the office space.

### Staff and Budget

The program is staffed by a part-time program director, who is assisted by the director of El Programa Hispano. Among other things, the program director recruits Spanish-speaking volunteers to teach the health classes.

The program's annual budget is \$38,000, which includes class materials and child care for children of the parish health promoters.

### Effect on Community

The program has received a positive response from the community, especially from pastors, who are pleased to have a new health resource available to their parishioners.

### Contact:

**Rene M. Campagna**  
Director, Mission  
Integration  
Providence Portland  
Medical Center  
Portland, OR  
503-215-5338



### Practical Advice

Listen to your partners. Be flexible.  
Don't create an exclusive referral network because that just breeds suspicion.  
Be prepared to see that other agencies and institutions may be better suited than your own to serve the community.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

[www.chausa.org](http://www.chausa.org)

# HEALTH PROGRESS®

---

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, May-June 2001  
Copyright © 2001 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States

---