

Provider

PROFILE

ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL

A Speakers Bureau Helps a Hospital Share Its Mission

Community education is an important aspect of hospital services. It enables providers to promote their values and mission in the marketplace and may also increase their admissions as the public becomes more aware of the services they offer.

At St. Mary's Hospital, a 430-bed acute care hospital in West Palm Beach, FL, many opportunities to promote the hospital's life-enhancing or life-saving services were being missed because there was no formal

mechanism for meeting the community's requests for speakers. To solve this problem—while also increasing staff, physician, and community awareness of the hospital's mission and values—in 1988 St. Mary's education department launched the Community Health Education Speakers Bureau.

FEW RESOURCES

The education department found few resources on how to establish a speakers bureau. Two helpful brochures were the

Dallas-based American Heart Association's "An Organizational Guide for Speakers Bureaus," and "Speakers Bureau" from Toastmasters International (Santa Anna, CA). None of the information related speakers bureaus to the promotion of an organization's mission and values in the community it serves.

RECRUITING SPEAKERS

The education department sent informal surveys to hospital staff to recruit them as speakers and to compile a list of the topics

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on which they could speak. The survey cover letter explained that the service would be another way to extend the hospital's healing mission in the community.

To be chosen as a speaker, an employee had to demonstrate attitudes and behaviors consistent with the hospital's mission. As a result of the survey, the department identified more than 100 persons willing to speak on a variety of topics, such as diet and nutrition, preventive care, stress management, family health issues, and end-of-life decisions.

PROMOTING THE BUREAU

St. Mary's community relations department developed public service announcements and press releases to promote the Community Health Education Speakers Bureau. They sent information about the service to program directors at area organizations. The information about the service emphasized the healing ministry of St. Mary's Hospital.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

St. Mary's Hospital based the operations and organization of the Community Health Education Speakers Bureau on M. R. Weisbord's concept of stakeholder involve-

Integration of Mission Values into the Speakers Bureau

ACCEPTANCE

- Topic list includes subjects related to physical, emotional, and spiritual health.
- All requests are considered. If bureau is unable to fulfill a request, it offers a referral.
- List is updated to reflect community needs.

COMPASSION

- Speakers bureau is a service that enables St. Mary's Hospital to promote its ministry of caring for all.

DIGNITY

- Goals of requesting group are considered.

- Requests are treated with respect.

- Professional attitude is maintained in all speakers bureau activities.

HOSPITALITY

- Speakers and topics selected are appropriate to requesting group's needs and knowledge level.

- Speakers are selected based on ability to create a welcoming and joyful atmosphere.

REVERENCE FOR LIFE

- Alternatives are tactfully offered in response to inappropriate topic requests.

- Topic list includes ethical issues.

ment in which the persons who will be implementing the program are involved in the planning (*Productive Workplaces: Organizing for Dignity, Meaning and Community*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1987). Experienced speakers helped the director of education draft the Community Health Education Speakers Bureau's operating policies and procedures, which were consistent with the hospital's mission and value statements (see **Box** on p. 66).

These policies and procedures guide education department staff in evaluating and processing requests and assigning speakers. The guidelines also include mechanisms



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for monitoring speaker effectiveness, evaluating outcomes (how

well the speaker fit the agenda), and maintaining statistics.

When speakers are asked to give a presentation, the director of education gives them a copy of St. Mary's mission and values statements and asks them to promote these in their programs. The education department is also preparing a handout that highlights the hospital's heritage, mission, and values for speakers to give to the groups they address.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

The hospital, staff, and community have all benefited from the Community Health Education Speakers Bureau. Each year about 40 speeches are presented—a 700 per-

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cent increase in the number of talks St. Mary's Hospital staff presented before it formalized its speakers bureau four years ago. Staff who provide programs report a sense of satisfaction from helping promote the hospital's service

and mission. Persons who attend the programs receive valuable healthcare information. The organizations that have sponsored presentations have indicated satisfaction with the service. Many organizations have demonstrated this by requesting more speakers. The Community Health Education Speakers Bureau affords St. Mary's Hospital an opportunity to emphasize its Catholic healthcare ministry while sharing with the community a message of physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

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Key Steps for Implementing a Speakers Bureau

- Determine need.
- Review organization's mission and values.
 - Define goals and objectives.
 - Obtain administrative and organizational support.
 - Recruit speakers and develop topic list.
 - Establish policies and procedures.
 - Develop mechanisms for monitoring service and evaluating outcomes.
 - Develop promotional plan.
 - Hold in-service sessions for speakers.
 - Implement service.
 - Evaluate outcomes; modify (if indicated).
 - Evaluate policies and procedures; modify (if indicated).