**PASOs Program**

Location: South Carolina  
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Category: Promising Practice

**BACKGROUND**
South Carolina has the 4th fastest growing Latino population in the US. The reproductive health needs of the state’s Latino population are among the most important health issues facing both this population and health care services in the state. Most South Carolina Latinos are in their prime years for initiating sexual activity and starting families. Yet, Latinos in this new immigrant settlement area often lack the power to make healthy and informed decisions for themselves and their families due to stigma and discrimination, language/cultural barriers and difficulties in accessing health information and services due to their immigration status. The barriers they face in accessing information and services for the prevention, treatment and follow-up of important reproductive health issues impact the health and lives of all South Carolina residents.

By educating Latino parents, caregivers and parents-to-be on issues related to healthy pregnancies and prenatal care, as well as appropriate child development and resources for child health, and by advocating for better, more accessible services for Latinos, PASOs has a direct impact on improving the health of Latino families in South Carolina.

**PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**
The program goals were to:

- Ensure Latino women and children are empowered with adequate knowledge of reproductive, maternal, and child health and with skills to increase access to health care
- Develop partnerships with a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure access to care and achieve optimal health of Latino women and children
- Advocate for the health of Latino women and children and empower them with skills to advocate for themselves
- Create and sustain a lasting infrastructure for PASOs to thrive as it works to accomplish its mission

**TARGET POPULATION SERVED**
Pregnant Latina women and their support persons in 13 counties of South Carolina. The mean household income of PASOs’ participants is $15,586, and 91% do not have health insurance. The average education level is 8th grade and the majority is new immigrants (an average of approximately six years in the US).

**PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**
PASOs provides free, comprehensive prenatal classes (a 14-hour prenatal empowerment course), community health outreach and individual interventions to Latino families in 13 counties in South Carolina, as well as consultative services for maternal and child health providers and policy makers throughout the state. The program was developed on several theoretical foundations: Social Learning Theory, Social Support Theory and the Ecological Model.

PASOs provides specific training and new information to participants, instructing them step by step on how to use this knowledge to foster a healthy pregnancy and newborn child. The program uses a strengths-based approach and focuses on individual empowerment. Classes are held at community churches and outreach events are held in the neighborhoods where Latinos live, socialize and shop. The bonds formed in the prenatal classes among classmates and with their instructors exemplify the creation of social support and social networks. Additionally, the use of peer community health workers (Promotoras) demonstrates that the social environment includes outlets for information, advice, emotional support and help. PASOs focuses on the individual and the social-environmental factors as the targets for interventions through one-on-one interaction with program participants, classes in the group setting, community outreach and advocacy activities.

**TITLE V/MCH BLOCK GRANT MEASURES ADDRESSED**

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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>The percent of mothers who breastfeed their infants at 6 months of age.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td>Percent of very low birth weight infants delivered at facilities for high-risk deliveries and neonates.</td>
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<td>#18</td>
<td>Percent of infants born to pregnant women receiving prenatal care beginning in the first trimester.</td>
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PROGRAM OUTCOMES/EVALUATION DATA
All participants in the PASOs prenatal empowerment course are given a pre-test to measure knowledge and behavior related to healthy pregnancies. Graduates of the program are given a post-test with the same questions and questions related to quality and satisfaction upon completion of the course. The pre- and post-tests are then compared to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program in terms of its ability to increase knowledge and change behavior, and in delivering its messages in the most effective ways.

Questions on the pre- and post-test include those related to knowledge of what to do with preterm symptoms; level of satisfaction with communication with doctor; reasons for going to prenatal care; knowledge of pre-term labor definition and signs of pre-term labor; knowledge of types of cheese to avoid during pregnancy and the reasons to avoid them; knowledge of folic acid use, including when to begin taking folic acid and daily intake of multivitamins with folic acid; knowledge of iron-rich foods; knowledge of normal fetal movement; knowledge of right moment to go to the hospital for delivery; knowledge that it is normal to feel sad after delivery; and knowledge of the type of anesthesia to use during delivery. Current evaluation results show significant increases in knowledge in all indicators assessed.

Plans are currently in development for analysis of medium and long-term outcomes related to the health of the baby and family.

PROGRAM COST
The program received initial funding through a $25,000 grant from the March of Dimes. As the program developed, it initiated a partnership with the South Carolina Public Health Institute (SCPHI) and the University of South Carolina’s Arnold School of Public Health and received joint funding from The Duke Endowment. Currently, PASOs has 8 FTEs and various part-time positions. A local program annual operating budget is approximately $97,688 for 100 prenatal class participants, 870 individual interventions provided and 800 community members reached through outreach events. The prenatal course represents approximately 30% of program coordinators’ time, indicating a per person cost of $293 for the 14-hour course.

ASSETS & CHALLENGES

Assets
- Participant and community involvement and input was key to developing the curriculum and was incorporated into program planning for community outreach and advocacy strategies
- Resourcefulness in identifying community partners, resources and funding opportunities

Challenges
- Lack of support in the hospital systems where the program began
- Socio-political climate in South Carolina, which is extremely anti-immigrant, and has been worsened by The South Carolina Illegal Immigration Reform Act of 2008
- Limited program budget and funds

Overcoming Challenges
- Presenting program successes to the Latino Perinatal Health Network, the March of Dimes, and other committed partners led to an Advisory Board, which helped find a more appropriate home with the South Carolina Public Health Institute
- Due to the socio-political climate, focus has been on incremental changes and increasing awareness of all players involved and how a particular issue affects families and communities.
- Perseverance, good outcomes, and strong and trusting relationships have enabled PASOs to gain access to funding from local and national foundations

LESSONS LEARNED
The culturally-appropriate tailored curriculum and the other best practices used for normal operations were very successful, as were the organizational partnership and advocacy activities, and the current focus on leadership training and development of program graduates. A more intense qualitative evaluation from the very beginning would have resulted in more current and in-depth data on program effectiveness. Additionally, the Advisory Council and operating the program at the community-level (rather than beginning in a hospital) would have been beneficial from the onset.

FUTURE STEPS
PASOs plans to expand into new counties and thereby extending its reach to all areas of the state where significant Latino populations live. Next steps include continuing to evaluate and refine existing projects through both quantitative and qualitative measures. In addition, efforts are being made to establish and train community health workers in each site who can help spread and sustain the program’s health messages. PASOs will also work toward achieving more financial stability and independence.

COLLABORATIONS
To achieve its goals, PASOs maintains strong partnerships with many partner organizations including: South Carolina Public Health Institute, Consortium for Latino Immigration Studies, South Carolina Hispanic/Latino Health Coalition, South Carolina Chapter of the March of Dimes, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental
Key words: Perinatal Health, Prenatal Care, Access to Care, Birth Outcomes, Family Health, Health Promotion, Community Based Health Services, Promotora

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This program was highlighted at AMCHP’s 2012 Annual Conference with a Promising Practice award.