

VACUNÉMONOS IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Hispanic adults are experiencing a disparity in receipt of needed immunizations in comparison to White non-Hispanic adults. Furthermore, no minority/ethnic community has yet reached the Healthy People 2010 goals in immunization for children or adults. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC), over 40,000 adults die each year from vaccine-preventable diseases: 36,000 from influenza and 5,000 from pneumococcal disease. Of these, almost all of those who succumb to influenza and its complications are 65 years of age and older, while about one-half of those who die from pneumococcal disease are elderly.

Hispanic adults have only 54% and 36% immunization coverage for influenza and pneumococcal disease respectively, compared to 68% and 60% for whites. Members of the Hispanic community, especially older adults, experience a number of unique barriers to making good immunization decisions. These barriers include ease of accessibility to vaccinations, knowledge of how critical it is to follow the vaccination schedules, and lack of comfort in going to a mainstream medical provider.

In light of this, The National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA), with support from the CDC, is developing *Vacunémonos*, a community driven Immunization Program with a view to raising immunization rates in seven selected communities across the U.S. Key elements of the program are: work with affiliated community-based organizations, community assessments, capacity-building technical assistance, the use of *promotores de salud* (community health workers), the development of broad-based community coalitions to address the problem, cultural-sensitivity training for healthcare providers and members of the Hispanic community, and annual events to promote and provide vaccination.

Vacunémonos seeks to conduct a model program which utilizes targeted, culturally-appropriate bilingual outreach and education materials, in conjunction with proven approaches to raising immunization rates in order to achieve the following goals:

1. To make strides toward the *Healthy People 2010* goals of 90% coverage for children and 60% for adults in Hispanic communities in three years.
2. To develop participating local community-based organizations' capacity to effectively implement community immunization projects.
3. To establish ongoing positive healthcare provider/patient relationships between local healthcare providers and members of the Hispanic communities by bridging any cultural gaps that may currently exist between them.

The *Vacunémonos* program is designed to be continuous and sustainable. To achieve this, rather than simply running periodical surveys, the *promotores de salud* will work directly and regularly with their community members to increase sustainability of interventions. The program is being implemented successfully through community based organizations in various communities across the U.S.