

Vaccinate and Vote

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Type of Activity

Vaccinate and Vote is an Election Day influenza vaccination program, designed by the statewide immunization coalition Project Immunize Virginia (PIV), whose lead agency is the Center for Pediatric Research of Eastern Virginia Medical School. In 2003, PIV provided funding and technical assistance to the Central Shenandoah Health District and Augusta Medical Center to implement Vaccinate and Vote in Staunton and Waynesboro, the 2 cities within Augusta County, VA.

Description of Project

PIV selected Staunton and Waynesboro, as 2 of the 6 localities within the state that had the highest death rate from influenza and pneumonia for the year 2001. PIV's coordinator approached the local health department, who in turn, approached the local hospital to coordinate an influenza vaccination program for 2003 to increase the immunization rate for the vaccine in these 2 localities. Both the health department and the hospital are active in the Community Health Forum, a group of community leaders concerned with the health of the citizens in Staunton, Waynesboro and Augusta County. The Health Forum endorsed the project and a small committee was formed with representatives from the health department and the hospital. The committee decided to address improved access to the vaccine, with the projected outcome of reaching more individuals with the service. It was decided that Election Day would provide greater access to more individuals throughout the large geographic area, and flu vaccines would be offered at the voting precincts. Since the 2 cities were identified as target areas, the group decided to provide flu vaccinations at all 9 election sites within the 2 localities. In addition 3 other sites within the county with the highest voter turnout were also targeted.

Voter Registrars were contacted to determine average voter turnout at each location in order to estimate potential recipients and required resources. Precinct coordinators and facility liaisons were contacted to solicit their support and develop a logistical plan. In an effort to preserve human resources, the group decided to offer the vaccination service from 6am-10am and again from 3pm-7pm on November 4, 2003 at the 12 locations throughout the county. In kind contributions from both health care organizations complemented the grant money, administered by PIV.

Outcomes.

Total vaccinations given during Vaccinate and Vote totaled 842, with 30% receiving the vaccine for the first time. We received feedback from many voter surveys that indicated they received the vaccine because it was convenient and they would not have sought the service from their health care provider. 95% indicated that they would take the vaccine again next year.

The Vaccinate and Vote committee has made the recommendation to the Community Health Forum that the project continue, with 2004 expansion to all voting precincts within the county (24) for the entire time that the polls are open. Human resources will be provided by both paid and volunteer nursing professionals, in addition to clerical support personnel and committed citizens, with continued support of both human and financial resources from the health department and the hospital.

Lessons Learned

Site evaluation, registrar collaboration and volunteer training were essential components of the plan. Newspaper was the best method of PR. Only 1% of the participants were not Caucasian. Improvements for next year include: 1) enhanced PR with a portion targeted directly to the minority groups, 2) full Election Day coverage at all county polls because of higher anticipated voter turn-out with the Presidential Election, 3) redesign of the participant evaluation tool, 4) a volunteer survival kit at each location and 5) enhanced communication with each site during the day, including site visits by the coordinators.

This project exemplified the effective collaboration of an academic institution with both a public and private health care system in an effort to address an identified public health issue and positively impact the health of the community. We will continue to evaluate this project as the state health department reviews the 2003 mortality data for our area.

Contact information

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