



Neighborhood Fire Stations Serve as Venues for Preventive Health Services: An Innovative Partnership Between Health and Fire Departments



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Background

The City of El Paso Fire and Health Department joined forces to implement a five-year initiative to implement an innovative service delivery for preventive health services and improve access for Medicaid and low-income uninsured population. This initiative, with coordination of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel, serve as providers of screening/vaccination services with neighborhood fire stations as established as service venues. Given the physician shortage and disproportionate number of low-income residents (33%) of the population, 41% of the adults in El Paso do not have a regular source of medical care including access to preventive health services. The Fire Department's EMS Division is in a unique position to serve a substantial number of unaffiliated Medicaid and uninsured adults and provide them the critical vaccinations and health screenings they need. The basis for this initiative was the proximity of fire stations within communities to conveniently access health services. In addition, EMS personnel are trusted role models who are trained to offer medical services.

Project Overview

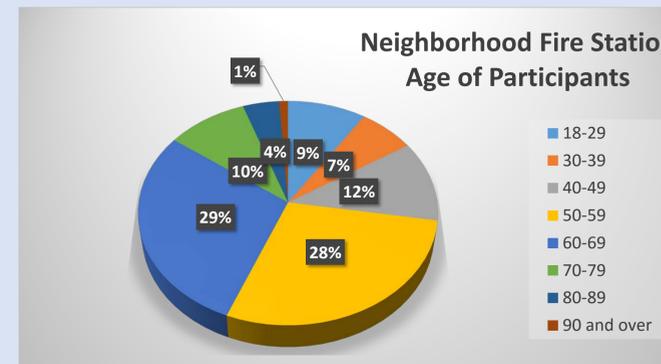
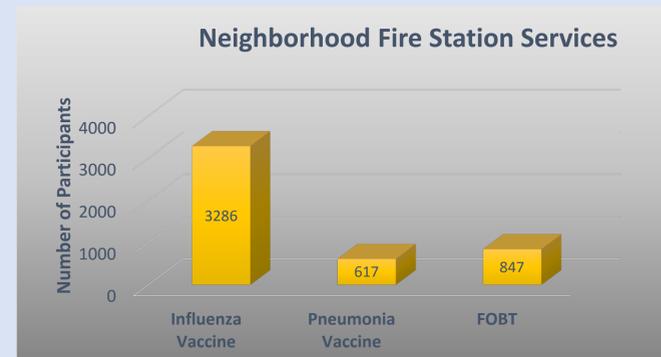
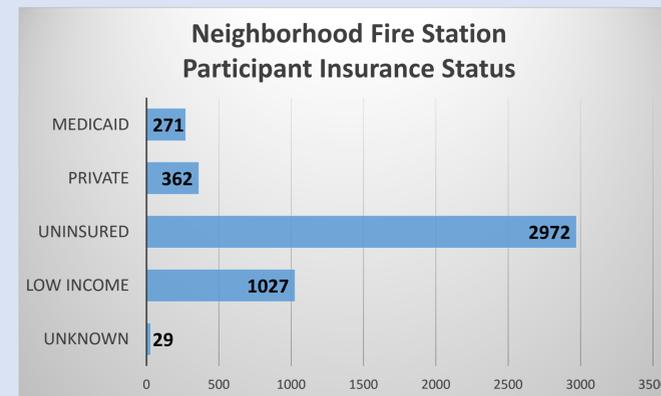
- All participants completed a race, ethnicity and language (REAL) demographic interview survey and a brief health assessment upon registration.
- El Paso Fire Department (EPFD) EMS personnel administered influenza and pneumonia vaccinations per standing delegation orders from medical director.
 - Influenza vaccine- persons 18 years of age and older who did not receive vaccine in the past year
 - Pneumonia vaccine- persons 65 years of age and older who did not receive vaccine in the past five years
- Participants 50 years and older who were not screened in the past year for colorectal cancer also received a fecal occult blood test (FOBT) kit to conduct at home and mail/deliver results.
- Clinic dates and locations were scheduled based on REAL survey information showing areas by zip code with greatest participation of Medicaid, low-income and uninsured persons.

Methods

A cross-sectional REAL interview survey conducted in 2014-2018 among participants of the fire station clinics was used to assess impact on preventive health services. Descriptive measures on demographics, social determinants and health history were analyzed to quantify outcomes.

Results

- A total of 125 fire station clinics were conducted by EMS personnel during weekly and weekend scheduled events.
- Overall, 4,661 participants received one or more preventive health services ranging from blood pressure checks, glucose testing, colorectal cancer screening kits, pneumonia and influenza vaccines.
- 64% of participants reported not having insurance.
- 93% identified themselves as Hispanic, 6% identified as Non-Hispanic, and 1% did not provide a response.
- 63% female, 36% male, and 1% did not provide a response.
- The majority of participants, 58%, are 50 to 69 years old.



Lessons Learned

- When the program began, there was an average of 10 participants per event. Strategies to improve participation included newspaper advertisements, local television announcements, community event posters, and probed participants to disseminate information. Based on responses from a short satisfaction survey word of mouth and television were the most cited methods of learning about the fire station clinics. To date, about 100 participants are served at each clinic event within the four hour period.
- Data collection consisted of hard copy surveys that were later entered on an electronic database. This process was time consuming and allowed for data transcription errors and missing information. To improve this process an electronic version of the survey was adopted and tablets were purchased to collect data more efficiently.
- Participants reported lost of FOBT kits, not remembering to return, difficulty with food restrictions and not understanding instructions. To increase the return rate pictograph instructions, follow-up by health educators and offering smoke alarms and fire extinguishers as incentives motivated participants.

Discussion

- Due to this collaboration, the EPFD converted a centrally-located older fire station into a community outreach facility now known as the Safety & Health Outreach Center (SHOC). The SHOC serves as an added venue for many community health activities to increase wellness and education. During the flu season, one fire station clinic per week is held at the SHOC.
- The role of the health department staff is to track overall progress of project, report outcomes to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to earn associated funding, and assist with quality improvement strategies.
- Collaboration efforts among health department and EPFD were recognized during the 2016 Texas EMS Conference with the Public Information/Injury Prevention award as an innovative model for statewide replication.
- Further collaboration to increase access for male participants and improve other health services such as glucose testing and blood pressure check will be ongoing efforts.

Acknowledgement

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