

Seniors / Volunteers for Childhood Immunization program

History:

The Seniors / Volunteers for Childhood Immunization program began in 1993 funded by an Administration on Aging grant. After the 17 demonstration project was complete, the Texas Department of Health elected to fund the dissemination of the program beyond the initial demonstration sites in Denton and Dallas. To date, the program has operated in the following communities: Amarillo, Austin, Beaumont/Port Arthur, Big Spring, Colorado City, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Denton, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Levelland, Longview, Sherman, Temple and Tulia; a new site in Laredo will be established this year.

Model features:

Senior volunteers interact with new mothers at the hospital bedside for the purpose of discussing the importance of immunizations and to solicit enrollment in a reminder program. Interested mothers/parents complete a card, providing information about the infant's name, birth date, immunization home, contact information (address, phone number) for both their family and another family friend or member, and sign an informed consent allowing access to their infant's immunization record. The information is entered into a database from which reminder cards are sent for the 2, 4, 6, and 12 month immunizations. Additionally, another card is sent when the infant is 15 – 18 months; at that point, the immunization records are reviewed to determine if the enrolled infant has received his/her immunizations, specifically the fourth dose of the DTaP vaccine.

Evaluation results:

Success is measured through the percentage of enrolled infants who receive the fourth dose of the DTaP vaccine. To date, the percentage rate is not demonstrably better than the immunization rate in Texas. Challenges to the SVCI program include: mobility of the parents, inability to gain information as to the enrolled infant's immunization status, and failure to contact enrolled parents.

The SVCI program has been successful in other ways, such as: the number/percentage of infants enrolled in the program, satisfaction of the senior volunteers involved with the program, anecdotal responses from parents satisfied with the program, and the willingness of parents to reenroll when another child is born.

Since the dissemination of the SVCI program (1994) up to 2003, 181,630 infants have been enrolled, and over 500,000 reminders have been sent. The program currently operates in seven sites, with Laredo being the eighth, with over 300 senior volunteers and in 22 hospitals.