Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Published: March 19, 2006

State of Maine Public Health Nursing Program

Vote and Vaccinate Model Project Report (ID# 051975)

The Problem

The Public Health Nursing Program is a statewide organization with a staff of 58 public health nurses and 80 years of experience participating in community-based immunization clinics. It provides 40 or 50 flu immunization clinics annually for state employees. Only two cities in this large and rural state have their own health departments. Very little county government structure exists. Many people live in remote locations where available services are thin and transportation is a challenge.

The Project

Vote and Vaccinate offered an opportunity to serve people coming to a single location, and "to let them know that public health nursing is around and to promote our program," according to project director Jan Morrissette, R.N., M.S.N. Building on an existing infrastructure, the Public Health Nursing Program was able to administer the Vote and Vaccinate project from its central office, working through regional offices to establish eight polling place clinics.

Results

- Project staff offered *Vote and Vaccinate* clinics at polling places in eight small towns across the state, with populations ranging from 718 to 6,476 and including medically underserved areas.
- The Public Health Nursing Program did not have flu vaccine at these sites since available vaccine was directed to public health clinics serving a high-risk population.
- Nurses offered flu prevention education, distributing informational materials, waterless hand cleaner and tissues.
- The nurses displayed posters to promote healthy practices and provide information about where to find a flu vaccine.
- Project director Morrissette noted the welcome opportunity to partner with town officials in establishing the clinics and reported that "people were appreciative of the information they received."

Afterward

Project staff will consider offering the *Vote and Vaccinate* program again, either in 2006 or during the next presidential election in 2008, when turnout is highest. A final decision depends on the Public Health Nursing program's priorities and funding.