Establishing collaborative relationships with local referral agencies to increase WIC clientele in Clackamas County, Oregon

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Goal:
To increase enrollment of pregnant women in the Clackamas County Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program by informing medical personnel at referral agencies about WIC’s services.

Objectives:

1. By December 14th, 2015, we aim to increase the number of women on Medicaid in Clackamas County who are also enrolled in WIC from 15-20% to 25-30% compared to December 2013.
2. By December 14th, 2015, we plan to increase the total number of WIC eligible women who receive WIC services by 7% in Clackamas County compared to December 2013.
3. By March 1st 2015, we plan to increase the number of WIC referrals from medical agencies within Clackamas County by 20% compared to December 2013.

Significance:
In 2013, only 31% of WIC eligible pregnant women in Clackamas County utilized WIC services. This rate is among the lowest in the state. By providing more resources to facilities who regularly see pregnant women, we hope that these eligible women will participate in WIC. Increased participation in WIC services would ultimately lead to better birth outcomes and healthier moms in Clackamas County, Oregon.

Implementation:
In January 2015, we created packages of educational resources about WIC and distributed them to over 80 referral agencies in Clackamas County. The packets included:
- A cover letter
- WIC’s 40th birthday card
- WIC informational brochures
- Video outlining WIC services

The referral agencies we targeted included medical care providers at clinics across Clackamas County such as Legacy Clinic Firwood, Sunnyside Health Center, and Adventist Women’s Health Center. Between January 21st and March 15th, new WIC participants were asked if they were referred by their healthcare providers (see graph).

Evaluation:
In March 2015, 15 of the referral agencies were contacted and asked these questions:
- "Did you receive the WIC packet?"
- If no, "Would you benefit from WIC resources like brochures, DVD’s and information for clients?"
- If yes, "Was the information beneficial to you?" and "Did the information help you to refer clients to the WIC program?"
- "Would you be interested in receiving WIC materials?"

Many medical providers did not receive the packet. This might demonstrate a lack of communication between office staff. Providers who regularly saw pregnant women demonstrated an interest in receiving WIC materials. These materials could make women aware of their WIC eligibility, and in turn, WIC could provide them with services to aid in a healthy pregnancy.

Next Steps:
WIC staff will continue to access new participant referrals in order to complete objectives 1 and 2.

Lessons Learned:
- Referrals between agencies are low
- Coordination should be done frequently
- Follow-up and face-to-face communication enhances outcomes
- Lack of communication between staff might affect outcomes