Increasing Cultural Competency of Healthcare Providers and Public Health Professionals
Working with Persons with Disabilities

Pilot Training Program

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Background
Worldwide, there are over a billion people living with disabilities, and this disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. Within Florida, 65 of 67 counties have >20% prevalence of persons with disabilities (PWD), and >33% of Floridians aged ≥65 are PWD. Moreover, the elderly population is expected to grow exponentially, making an understanding of disparities facing PWD and methods to advocate for and increase healthcare access and self-care practices more important than ever.

Despite the growing PWD population, a common barrier to care is difficulty for PWDs in communicating with health care providers. In addition to communication concerns, there are many other barriers to care faced by PWD.

There is no regularly available training program specifically targeted to increasing cultural competency, understanding, and communication techniques of healthcare providers working with PWDs. The National Council on Disabilities has marked this lack of training as the most significant barrier to quality care for PWDs.

Methods
The Disability and Health Program (DHP) housed jointly at the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and the University of Florida (UF) has created an interactive training program for healthcare providers and public health professionals to gain understanding and knowledge on working with PWDs. The program has various modules that range from 30 minutes to two hours, with flexibility to fit specific needs of the organization seeking training. It comprises up to five sections: (I) Introduction to Disability, (II) General Health and Chronic Disease, (III) The Care Experience and Communication, (IV) Advocating for Accessible Services, and (V) Healthy Diet and Exercise.

The program is presented via Microsoft Powerpoint, with the longer modules including up to three videos created by the DOH. Data used in the training program is from the 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) and Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS), analyzed by the UF DHP team.

Outcomes
The training program has been implemented as a pilot program, and was utilized at the North Central Florida Community Health Worker Regional Training Conference as one of three mandatory seminars. Of the three mandatory seminars, the PWD Competency seminar received the highest rankings from attendees in the categories of relevancy, thoroughness, and usefulness.

Implications
Dissemination efforts for the training program will allow implications of diverse representation of health needs for PWD, and the cultural competence of health professionals working with PWD, to be realized. Success of the training program will increase communication between providers and patients, increase accessibility to resources for PWD, increase provider comfort and confidence in speaking to PWDs, and ultimately contribute to better health outcomes.

Goals
- To increase cultural competency, inclusion necessities, and awareness of health disparities faced by PWD among health professionals.
- To provide resources, skills, and tools that can be used to aid PWD in increasing health literacy.