

FOOD PROCESSING PLANT OUTREACH

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FOOD PROCESSING PLANT OUTREACH is a community level intervention designed to offer information about HIV and community medical care services in strategic venues within the workplace environment. The key characteristics of Food Processing Plant Outreach are: the positive and trusting relationship developed between the host corporation and agency; the targeting of new workers during orientation sessions and the general worker population during scheduled shifts; the agency staff’s knowledge of the largely migrant community and their ability to communicate in the dominant language spoken; and the promotion of no-cost, no-discrimination HIV medical services offered in the community.

CURRENT ACTIVITY SETTING

*Medical Clinic and Social Services Agency,
Minority HIV Prevention Program*

- ✓ Directly links the client to medical care
- ✓ Gets the client in a conversation about starting medical care
- ✓ Brings the agency closer to where HIV+ people are so that the conversation can begin

I. DESCRIPTION

OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To increase knowledge and awareness of HIV in the greater community
- ▶ To provide information about HIV in a workplace that employs a large percentage of the area’s population
- ▶ To provide information to new workers during their initial orientation sessions and to the general work population during regular shift hours
- ▶ To inform workers about the care and services available at the local agency
- ▶ To help link people to health care services

POPULATION SERVED

- ▶ Migrant working populations living in rural communities
- ▶ Latino men and women who speak English and Spanish

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Food Processing Plant Outreach allows agency staff to reach a large number of rural residents and to share with them information about HIV and the health care services available in their community.



QUICK NOTES:

Targeting of Outreach Location

- ▶▶ The agency identifies the food processing plants within the general area that employ the greatest number of workers.
- ▶▶ Then the agency identifies the appropriate contact at each plant’s corporate office and sends a letter requesting permission to offer the outreach activity at the plant in question. The letter also outlines the agency’s history and service portfolio.
- ▶▶ When approval is granted, usually after several rounds of communication with plant management, HIV outreach is scheduled during strategic points in the plant’s operations: 1) during the orientation session for newly hired workers; and 2) at specified hours during the regular shifts for the entire work population.

Preparation

- ▶▶ The agency secures approval for bringing in and distributing materials to workers by contacting the person in charge of safety coordination at the plant (often a nurse).
- ▶▶ The person in charge of orientation contacts an agency outreach worker with details of the next new-hire orientation, including the date and time, the number of new hires expected to attend, and the amount of time allotted to the outreach (usually 15 minutes).
- ▶▶ The outreach worker prepares a presentation on agency services appropriate for an audience of new-hires who are also new to the processing plant culture. Bearing in mind that many new hires are overwhelmed by the amount of information they receive during orientation, the outreach worker plans a brief but friendly presentation that does not exceed the time allotted.
- ▶▶ Safe-sex packets are prepared for the orientation session. They include condoms, lubricant, a safer-sex information card, and the name and number of a case manager from the agency. The packets are left at the nurse’s station or office.

Outreach Session at New-Hire Orientation:

- ▶▶ When the outreach worker enters the room where orientation is taking place, the plant’s orientation trainer introduces him/her as someone from the community who has come to talk about health issues and available health care services.
- ▶▶ The outreach worker delivers the orientation in English, Spanish, or both, depending on the language preference of the group.
- ▶▶ The outreach worker introduces him or herself and, in briefly describing the agency, stresses the confidential nature of the services it provides. S/he communicates a “welcoming” and friendly attitude by saying things like, “I’m here to help you,” and “I know you are new to the community.” S/he informs the group of the safer-sex kits available at the nurse’s office.
- ▶▶ The outreach worker lets the group of newly hired workers know that they can speak to him/her anytime during the course of their employment and thereafter, get more information on HIV, or set up an appointment for free testing or medical services.
- ▶▶ The outreach worker allows a few minutes for questions, then hands out pamphlets about the agency’s services. Extra pamphlets are displayed in holders in the training room where employees can access them later.

Preparation for Outreach During Work Shifts

- ▶▶ The outreach worker and plant safety coordinator determine the outreach schedule, identifying the most useful days, times, and places for the outreach workers to be on the plant premises. It is important that the service in no way interfere with work productivity.
- ▶▶ Shift changes and cafeteria hours are usually identified as ideal times for outreach. Plant-floor exits and paycheck disbursement areas are usually identified as ideal locations. Coordination with other activities, such as free food events and health fairs, can be advantageous.
- ▶▶ The outreach worker e-mails the plant management informational posters to print and post around the plant letting the employees know when and where the agency will set up and be available.
- ▶▶ Each outreach intervention requires an education display board, pamphlets on HIV infection, information about testing and care services available at the agency, and promotional gifts such as pencils and pens.
- ▶▶ Two outreach workers staff the booth (usually a table with chairs) at the designated area. If the outreach workers do not speak both English and Spanish, they arrange for an interpreter to be present.

A Typical Scenario During General Work Shift Outreach

- ▶▶ A group of four or five women walks up to the outreach table, which is set up outside the plant cafeteria. “What are you doing?” they ask the outreach workers.

- ▶ The outreach workers explain who they are and tell the women about the services the agency offers, such as free HIV testing, medical care, and referrals to other community resources. One of the outreach workers hands each of the women a business card and a brochure.
- ▶ The outreach workers offer the group other materials they have at the table and ask the women if they would like to ask any questions about HIV.
- ▶ The outreach workers answer all the questions. The conversation lasts as long as the workers stay engaged.
- ▶ If an outreach worker senses that someone may want to ask a more personal question or that “something’s going on,” s/he casually takes the person aside for a more private conversation.
- ▶ During this conversation, someone might reveal a need for HIV testing or mention someone in the family who has been diagnosed with HIV or has unidentified health problems. The outreach worker encourages the person to follow up with a telephone call or by making an appointment at the agency clinic for testing, medical care, or more information. The outreach worker always stresses that the services provided by the agency are free.
- ▶ When a group visiting the booth returns to work, each member has a card with the outreach workers’ names and telephone numbers, and the agency address. Over time, many men and women working at the plant start to recognize the outreach workers, trust them, and eventually ask for information.

PROMOTION OF ACTIVITY

- ▶ Food Processing Plant Outreach exists as part of the mandatory, new-hire orientation.
- ▶ The activity is promoted with bilingual (English and Spanish) posters appearing in locations throughout the plant, including the area where paychecks are distributed, the cafeteria, and on the door of the nurse’s office. The posters advertise free testing and medical care.
- ▶ The consistent presence of the same outreach workers fosters familiarity among the plant workers who eventually feel free to speak to them about health issues.

II. LOGISTICS

STAFF REQUIRED

- ▶ Two HIV outreach workers
- ▶ A translator or interpreter, as necessary

TRAINING & SKILLS

- ▶ The outreach workers have basic HIV training (i.e., Red Cross and state-funded HIV training) as well as counseling and testing education and training.
- ▶ The outreach workers must have an intimate knowledge of the community.
- ▶ The outreach workers must have an open, friendly, and caring approach and the ability to communicate simply, clearly, and discreetly.

PLACE OF ACTIVITY

- ▶ During new-hire orientations, the outreach is done in the training room.
- ▶ General worker outreach takes place in the cafeteria, at the work floor’s exit, and in other areas of the plant with high personnel traffic.

FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITY

- ▶▶ New-hire orientation happens twice monthly, or as needed.
- ▶▶ General worker outreach takes place once every two or three months for two hours at a time.

OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS

None

SUPPORT SERVICES

Translation for languages spoken by workers at the plant but not by the outreach workers

CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶▶ In order for this activity to be successful, the agency must maintain a strong, positive relationship with the company and its plant management personnel.
- ▶▶ The activity should take place during full shifts at the plant in order to reach as many people as possible.

III. STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES

STRENGTHS

- ▶▶ Employees can receive preliminary information and education about HIV and health care services without having to make a trip to the agency.
- ▶▶ The outreach workers' open, friendly, and caring attitude makes them very "approachable" to the workers.
- ▶▶ Because the outreach activity goes to a work location, it can reach men who might otherwise not seek care.
- ▶▶ The outreach workers are very observant: if they sense a person wants to talk more or is "keeping something inside," they are able to draw out personal issues by taking the person aside for a more individualized and private needs assessment.
- ▶▶ When plant employees see that someone from their own community is speaking about health, they recognize and begin to trust the person.

WEAKNESSES

- ▶▶ During new-hire orientation, the activity is "wedged" into an intense series of sessions, where the new employee may not be able to absorb very much information.
- ▶▶ During outreach to general employees, the outreach workers cannot speak to people for as long they would like, and the public nature of the space makes private conversations more challenging.

DIFFICULTIES FOR CLIENTS

- ▶▶ In the orientation, the new employee often feels anxious about a new job and receives more information than can be reasonably processed.
- ▶▶ It can be difficult for employees at the plant to get answers to all their questions or to get all the information they want about HIV because they are reluctant to raise personal issues in a common area.
- ▶▶ Some employees may feel that breaks in their shift schedules don't allow adequate time to talk with the outreach workers.
- ▶▶ Because of the difficulty in securing legal working papers for immigrant populations, some newly hired employees do not complete the entire orientation process and, therefore, are not linked to agency services through this activity.

DIFFICULTIES FOR STAFF

- ▶ Communication barriers for plant employees who speak languages other than Spanish or English.
- ▶ The outreach workers cannot commit sufficient time to each employee.
- ▶ Plants in rural areas are often far apart, requiring outreach staff to drive long distances.

OBSTACLES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶ Some companies might not let outreach workers enter their plants. Some company personnel might be reluctant to get involved in HIV outreach, or might believe that HIV isn't present in their community.
- ▶ There is often a general reluctance among people to accept that HIV exists in their community.

ACTIVITY NOT SUITED FOR

N/A

IV. OUTCOMES

EVALUATION

- ▶ The agency keeps quantitative data on the number of people with whom staff has talked at outreach events at the plant, and the number of brochures and business cards handed out.
- ▶ The agency administers intake assessments to all new clients. Among many questions, it asks the referral source for new clients.
- ▶ The agency keeps records on client awareness of HIV status, number of HIV tests, and the number and source of referrals.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

- ▶ The outreach workers receive positive feedback from the employees.
- ▶ The outreach workers report that employees at the plant begin to recognize them, trust them, and ask more questions about health issues related to HIV.
- ▶ A primary source of agency referrals is the food processing plant.
- ▶ Since the initiation of outreach work at the plant, HIV testing at the agency has increased by 100%.
- ▶ Employees who have participated in outreach report that family and friends with whom they have discussed agency services go to the agency to get tested or to ask for medical care referrals.
- ▶ Since the initiation of the outreach activity, there have been increases in the following: the number of phone calls requesting information for an HIV+ family member/friend, the number of visits to the agency, and the number of requests for agency services.
- ▶ The intake assessments for new clients at the agency reveal an increased community awareness of the agency's services and an increased use of medical services as a direct result of outreach efforts.
- ▶ The agency intake assessments report an increase in walk-in clients who were informed about the agency at their place of employment.
- ▶ Employees contact the outreach workers after plant visits to ask for more information or for appointments for particular health services. The outreach workers have documented an increase in the number of people who go to the agency for HIV testing or care after having spoken with them at the plant.

UNANTICIPATED BENEFITS

- ▶▶ Word of mouth referrals to people who do not work at the plants occur as a result of the outreach.
- ▶▶ The host corporation begins to trust the agency and recognizes its important role within the community.

“CONNECTING TO CARE” ELEMENTS OF ACTIVITY

- ▶▶ Workers understand that all the agency services are available at no cost, regardless of one’s legal working status. Promoting free services helps to link certain immigrant populations who are accustomed to free health care in their country of origin.
- ▶▶ The male and female Latino working population receives HIV education and information about care services in Spanish.
- ▶▶ People don’t have to go to an “HIV clinic” to receive initial health information; they receive it at work. The activity “comes to them,” which allows the agency to reach people who may be initially afraid of going to any official health provider, particularly one that is associated with HIV.
- ▶▶ The outreach workers’ open, friendly, and caring attitude makes them very “approachable” to the workers.

KEEP IN MIND...

- ▶▶ Be aware of the employees’ different education levels and the cultural differences among them.
- ▶▶ Be prepared for the environment of the plant: the onsite activities of a meat packing and food processing plant can be difficult to witness. There are also strong odors associated with food processing that might pose difficulties at first.
- ▶▶ Hearing HIV information in one’s own language is very important.