

**KRONKOSKY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS**

TOPIC: Healthcare Needs and the Elderly

DATE: November 6, 2003

PREPARED BY: Lauren Gulbas, Intern

PARTICIPANTS

Invited Agency Representatives

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| • Tony Hargrove | Ella Austin Community Center |
| • Ezequiel Rodriguez | Good Samaritan Center |
| • Carl Pfeifer | House of Neighborly Service |
| • Norma Funari | Madonna Neighborhood Center |
| • Stephanie Smith | Presa Community Center |
| • Sandra Posada | Wesley Community Center |

Foundation Staff

Palmer Moe	Managing Director
Tom McGuire	Grants Manager
Nancy Villa	Business Manager
Lauren Gulbas	Student Intern

PURPOSE

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the healthcare needs for the uninsured and elderly populations in Bexar County, including comprehensive demographic information. Specifically, the purpose was to define what services, if any, are provided to assist these individuals in meeting their medical needs, including assisting individuals in obtaining access to Medicare and Medicaid; assisting with access to low cost or free prescription medications; and the barriers or challenges of this population in gaining access to doctors, clinics, and hospitals.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO ELDERLY BY LOCAL COMMUNITY CENTERS

Ella Austin Community Center

- Provides services to 200 to 300 elderly individuals, and on average, these individuals are over the age of 70 years

- Provides food assistance: monthly help with certain commodities, including canned goods, breads, and pastries and occasional meals
- Offers prescription assistance based on a \$5 to \$10 co-pay per medication
- Through a partnership with UTHSC School of Nursing, practicing nurses come to the center and give classes on health care; they also provide health check-ups and make home visits
- Offers exercise programs one to two times per week

Good Samaritan Center

- Provides services to 200 to 300 individuals
- Helps individuals obtain information about benefits, including food stamps and healthcare assistance and will aid individuals in applying for such benefits
- Received a grant from the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation to provide care to homebound elderly
- Promotes health education and provides cognitive therapy
- Currently building a new senior center

House of Neighborly Service

- Program initiated in summer 2003
- Partnered with the UTHSC School of Nursing
- Currently serving 20 elderly individuals, but the program is growing
- Utilizes a holistic approach to healthcare and encourages seniors to become more active; as a result, elderly feel better, both mentally and physically, decreasing their dependence on medication
- Aids and encourages elderly to become self-sufficient

Madonna Neighborhood Center

- 83 individuals are currently registered in the senior program and 25 regularly attend the ceramics program
- Provides food assistance: food pantry
- Offers space and cooking utensils where individuals can cook their own food
- Provides gardens where individuals can grow and harvest food
- Supplies occasional prescription assistance, if funds are available
- Received funding from City Council for a TV for movie viewings, arts and crafts programs, and computers and computer learning programs

Presa Community Center

- Provides assistance with medications and food
- Christa Santa Rosa comes to provide health checks and explain how to properly take medications
- Provides a transportation service, which is funded by the city
- Encourages individuals to go to Palo Alto for water exercises
- Recently received a grant from HUD to work with Incarnate Word in establishing a computer resource learning center
- Students will help teach classes, collect oral histories from individuals within the community, and gather needs assessment

Wesley Community Center

- Partnered with Methodist Healthcare Ministries (MHM) to provide medical and dental care to individuals with no healthcare insurance
- Intake workers are available to explain insurance benefits and how to access such programs; social workers help refer individuals to the University Health System
- MHM provides a medication assistance program to those who are uninsured
- Provide HEB gift cards from an emergency assistance fund to help individuals buy food or medications
- Supply items that are not covered by food stamps, including toiletries
- Help individuals pay water bills
- MHM provide transportation (taxi vouchers) for doctor visits and other healthcare related circumstances

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE ELDERLY THAT DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY AFFECT HEALTH

- Most seniors live on a fixed income of \$550 to \$650 per month
 - On average, \$275 is spent on rent and utilities
 - Often times, individuals will have to choose between buying food or medications
 - Thus, food assistance indirectly helps seniors have money to buy medications
 - Medicaid only covers three prescriptions per month; many seniors have an average of 10 medications
 - To cut medication costs, individuals may share drugs with family members or employees, take half the prescribed dose, or skip days
 - However, doctors prescribe medications based on an individuals' height, weight, and age, and under the assumption that the individual will be taking the drug according to the prescribed instructions
 - 75% of seniors have a chronic illness; 50% have two chronic conditions, and 25% suffer from three or more chronic conditions
 - Overmedication leads to a number of complications, such as dementia and an increased likelihood of falling
 - Overmedication occurs because an individual seeks care from multiple physicians, and there is no collaboration
 - To counter the side effects of other medications, doctors may prescribe additional drugs
 - Sometimes, individuals will try and cure side effects by taking over-the-counter medicine, which can have adverse reactions with prescription drugs
 - There is a lack of medical professionals, both in pharmacies and healthcare, who specialize in geriatric care
 - When care is available, elderly patients feel that doctors do not attend to their needs and have a condescending attitude
 - Most elderly do not seek care because they fear that if they leave the home, they may fall
 - Falling is dangerous to elderly individuals; 15% to 25% of those who suffer from hip fractures will die within a year
 - Lack of transportation may inhibit individuals from seeking healthcare
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BARRIERS TO OBTAINING HEALTHCARE ASSISTANCE

- Intimidated by the daunting application process and overwhelming paperwork
- Unsure of programs that are available and corresponding eligibility requirements
- Illiteracy and language barriers further complicates these problems
- Many times an applicant is turned down and won't reapply
- There is a stigma that assistance means welfare
- Having some insurance prevents individuals from receiving other forms of healthcare assistance

BARRIERS TO PROVIDING CARE FOR ELDERLY

- Lack of funding and budget cuts
- As a result, many assistance programs are limited in what they can offer or else have been cut completely
- A change in vendors who supply food for nutrition programs has led to poorer food and service quality
- There are a number of people who are not being reached by community programs
- It is estimated that 6,000 individuals in the 78307 zip code are not accessing the community programs
- Many agencies, such as the San Antonio Department of Housing, provide assistance programs, but the waiting list is too long

SUGGESTIONS TO ASSIST ELDERLY AND UNINSURED IN OBTAINING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

- It is important to keep the bigger picture in mind
- For example, lack of access to low cost medications is complicated by numerous other factors, as mentioned above
- Incorporate an educational agenda within a Prescription Assistance Program
- Find ways to incorporate a senior's skills and abilities within the program
- Decrease feelings of isolation among the elderly, perhaps by increasing access to e-mail and Internet
- Encourage elderly patients to become active participants in healthcare and not simply passive recipients
- Get input from seniors to see what assistance programs would best serve their interests
- Need to ensure that patients are getting proper medications