

Intervention Plan for the Latino Community in Muscatine

Organization and Community Practice

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Intervention Plan

Introduction

Muscatine, Iowa is a strong community; a community that wants to improve through a variety of sustainable initiatives. There is a desire within the formal leadership of this community to be inclusive of all perspectives in the development of these initiatives. The scenic town of Muscatine located along the Mississippi river provides a beautiful place for residents to live, work, and engage with one another. Mark Twain wrote, “I remember Muscatine for its sunsets. I have never seen any on either side of the ocean that equaled them” (City of Muscatine, 2014).

Even with all its beauty and inclusive desires of the towns’ leadership, there remains a significant demographic of the population that lives and works within the community yet seems to be prevented from involvement in community decision making. This demographic is the Latino population, which represents 16.6% of the total population of Muscatine (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). While there are certainly many factors that contribute to this lack of involvement, one may look no further than the formal leadership itself to view, from a top-down perspective, a lack of representativeness among those that are within positions of power within the community. We came to this focus on formal leadership given information gathered through a needs and strengths assessment of the issue. Informants reported that word of mouth and social networks were important for engaging the Latino community, at the same time cultural competence of leadership in Muscatine was identified as a need for the Latino community. Leadership is therefore our focus for successfully engaging the Latino community in future health initiatives in Muscatine.

Given the educational, economic, and social intersections of the Latino segment and the rest of the population, we propose two interventions. The first places leaders of the Latino

population in positions of formal leadership within the community. The second is the formation of a Latino youth leadership organization that is given a voice within formal community leadership positions.

Goals

The goals for our intervention include specified impacts for major change, long-term outcomes, and short-term outcomes. The community issue presented would be alleviated if our four comprehensive, interconnected impacts were seen within the community. The first overall goal is for the Latino community to be fairly represented through formal and elected leadership roles within the community of Muscatine. This goal, if achieved, facilitates our additional goals. A second goal is to observe an increase in integration and cohesion amongst all populations within the community of Muscatine. By integration, we do not imply homogeneity or forced assimilation, rather a community where all are free to participate. The third goal is for the needs of the Muscatine Latino population to be met through representation and community resources. The last goal is for there to be more involvement of the Latino population in community initiatives. We believe our main goals of integration, resource allocation, and initiative involvement can be achieved if there is change in formal representation but we realize that all concepts are interconnected and interdependent.

Methods/Group Engagement

Muscatine is a community for all those who live within the community. Nearly 20% of the community is Latino. We did not intend to imply that the community at large is distinctly separate from the Latino community, however, we cannot deny the consistent sentiment expressed in all our key informant interviews that there exists community disconnect. The two underlying assumptions behind our method for intervention are basic: community members care

about their communities and communities flourish when all are equally incorporated. When we connect the identified resources with our recommended activities, we envision goal attainment because our methods employ concepts previously established as successful. Connecting people through groups is an important task because there exists a barrier similar to Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in improving the community issue (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). Connecting all invested community members is necessary because it will discredit “the common myth that the residents ... do not really care about their neighborhood,” (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). We think that in the community of Muscatine a common cognitive error has been used to justify minimal Latino involvement: those from the Latino community do not attend meetings/events therefore, they are not interested in participating. We think facilitating a dialogue between all interested parties would diminish the need for this justification and would start eroding this assumption.

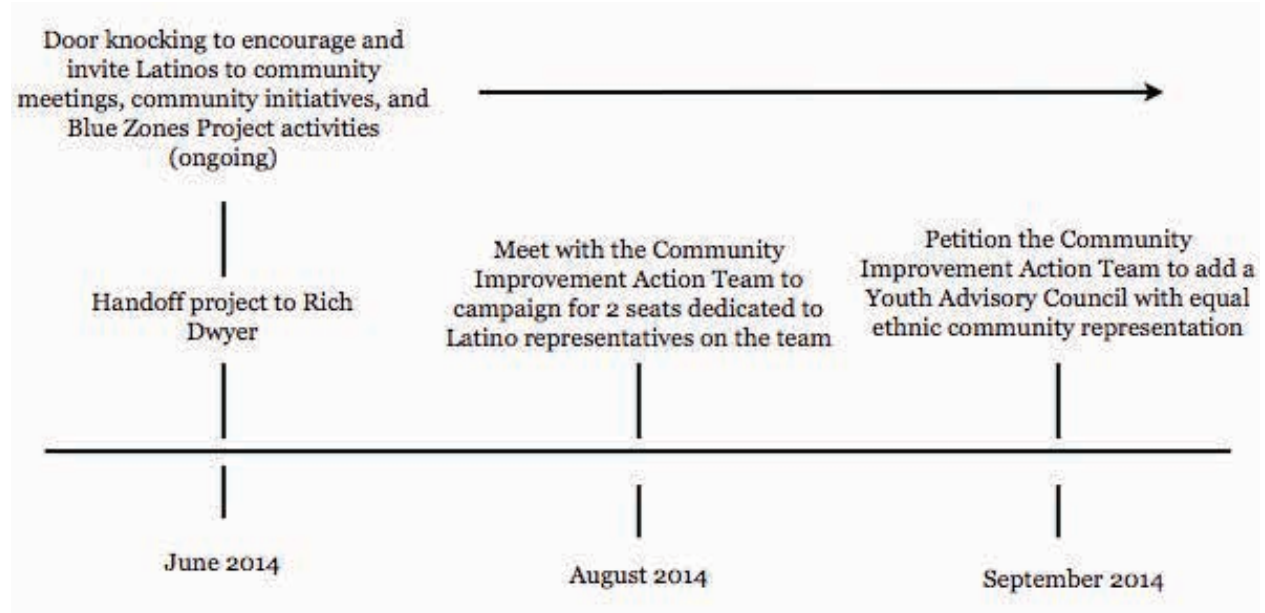
Much like the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (Medoff & Sklar, 1994) we think that collective, political action is often what yields the best results which is why we want to connect willing, informal Latino leaders directly with Mayor Hopkins and the CIAT. There are two main forces behind community improvement: collaboration and empowerment (Itzhaky & York, 2002). In working toward equal representation in formal leadership roles “individuals, families, groups, and communities increase their personal, interpersonal, socioeconomic, and political strength and develop influence toward improving their circumstances,” (Itzhaky & York, 2002).

As we conducted our key informant interviews, we learned about the importance of in-person communication and the value placed on the Latino youth for bridging community and family. This informs the remaining two intervention areas: door knocking initiatives and a youth

advisory committee. From the information gathered during our interviews it seems petitioning door-to-door would be the favored route for reaching the Muscatine Latino population. Those conducting the door knocking would be Blue Zones Project members who are familiar or particularly invested in increasing Latino community member involvement and potential members of the Community Improvement Action Team and/or the Youth Advisory Council. The activity of door knocking is inspired, in part, by asset-based community development; we think that communities know their needs but require organizing and idea promotion.

The idea of the Latino youths being the bridge between family and community was a common theme in our interviews. A Youth Advisory Council affiliated with the Community Improvement Action Team would allow for valuable input that is delivered directly to community leaders who can enact change. The council is inspired by research conducted on the needs of the GLBTQ youths within Miami Dade County. Researchers found “substantial differences between youth and adult perceptions of need” and we believe this discovery is not unique to the area nor the population (Craig, 2001). Youth representation was essential in the Dudley Street Initiative (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). Additionally, a youth leadership group has been successful in community and policy advocacy for health in Santa Cruz, California. This youth leadership group engages Latino youth specifically in youth development as well as policy advocacy (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2013). Together our methods for alleviating the community issue involve individual and group connections, in-person communication, and a focus on youth representation.

Proposed Activities Timeline



Strengths

The Muscatine community has several strengths to draw from to attempt to address the issue of separation between the Latino population and majority population of the community. The Community Improvement Action Team comprised of several community leaders who are members of the majority population, are interested in gaining insight into strategies to bridge the cultural divide. Likewise, there are leaders within the Latino population of the community that share these interests. The community as a whole has taken part in the Blue Zones Project in an attempt to transform Muscatine into a sustainable community that provides ways for all members to engage in healthy lifestyles. Placing informal Latino leaders in places of formal leadership within the Muscatine community creates a win-win situation. The current leadership will be able to gain insight into the perspectives of the Latino population and the Latino population will have representation and be empowered to provide input into the community decision-making process.

Duplication

In order to avoid duplicating work that other groups or organizations in Muscatine may also be engaging in, we will be providing our intervention plan to the Community Improvement Action Team, which is creating a comprehensive plan for community development. This comprehensive plan will include input from all groups and will outline the specific steps that the community as a whole will focus on.

Ethical Issues

Presently, there is a risk of community decisions being made without input from a significant portion of the population. This intervention addresses that ethical issue, but may bring up additional ethical issues. By appointing or electing Latino representation in positions of leadership within the general community, the perceptions and needs of the Latino population can be accurately reflected in community decision making. Latino representation increases the Latino population's right to self-determine through making choices about their community. Promoting self-determination is aligned with the NASW's Code of Ethics.

While this will allow culturally informed decisions about community initiatives to be made, there are ethical issues in determining who shall represent the Latino population. The risk of coercion and/or retaliation is possible and could come from either the Latino or majority population if either party disagrees with the representative. However, by drawing from informal leadership within the Latino population, using door-knocking to generate awareness, as well as relying upon the Community Improvement Action Team's willingness and desire to gain input from the Latino population, these ethical issues have been minimized. Not only do these interventions promote self-determination, they also, as stated by the National Association of Social Workers (2008):

promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.

Logic Model

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Impact
*Support from the Latino community Latino leaders willing to take on formal roles and stand as role models *Support from the Community Action team Support of the mayor to appoint Latino representatives *Support from Iowa for Sustainable Communities High School students willing to represent the youth population	*Appointment of 2 Latino representatives to the Community Action Team * Community I.... Action Team initiates a Youth Advisory Council with at least equal ethnic community representation *Door-knocking activities to invite Latinos to community meetings and spread the word about community initiatives and the Blue Zones Project	*2 seats on the Community Leadership Team filled with Latino representatives * Youth Advisory Council program to work with the Community Action Team has staff person and engages 10 youth *50% of Latino population accessed through door knocking activities *50% of Latino population knows about Blue Zones Project and other community initiatives	*2 appointments of Latino representatives to the Community Action Team * Youth Advisory Council to Community Action Team at least 20% Latino *10% of Latino population enrolled in Blue Zones Project *5% of those attending community initiatives meetings are Latino	*20% of formal leadership roles in the community held by Latino representatives (or current proportion of the population- if 15% of population is Latino than 15% of formal leadership roles held by Latinos) *30% of Latino population enrolled in Blue Zones Project *20% (or current Latino proportion of the population) of those attending community initiative meetings are Latino	*Equal representation of the Latino community in formal and elected leadership roles *Increased integration of the Latino population and Latino youth in the Muscatine community *Needs of Latino community being met through community resources and representation *Involvement of the Latino population in community initiatives

Evaluation Plan

The Community Improvement Action Team (CIAT) will be largely responsible for overseeing whether or not membership suggestions have been met. Their cooperation will be imperative to the success of this plan. First, the CIAT will need to indicate whether a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) has been developed. After initial formation, the percentage of Latino youth involved should be evaluated approximately one month after interest in the council has been determined in the community. By having each new member fill out a membership form, it would be relatively easy for the CIAT to track how many members identify as Latino. If after the month passes, and the short-term goal of 20% of members identifying as Latino has not been met, additional outreach may be required and a follow-up evaluation should be conducted approximately two to three weeks later by a member of the CIAT. Outreach activities can include recruitment presentations by the CIAT at the local schools and centers in the area.

After having a discussion with the mayor and CIAT about the importance of having a representative number of Latino leaders on the team, a check-in with both the mayor and CIAT will determine whether or not an agreement has been reached and if two seats are available for appointment of Latino community members. This check-in on the appointment process should take place approximately one month after door-knocking and other community outreach processes have occurred. After this time period, a member of the CIAT will be responsible for indicating if interest in the seats has been voiced, and will further monitor the appointment of two Latino community members to the team.

Door knocking activities will be completed by obtaining maps of Muscatine which will indicate the ethnic breakdown of the different neighborhoods, and will show those involved where Latino individuals primarily reside. The CIAT should use these maps as a guide to determine where to begin with the outreach. By having each individual indicate how many

homes he or she visits, it will be possible to determine the overall percentage of Latino individuals who have been reached by this effort. It would then be possible to indicate how many individuals were informed about the Blue Zones project and the community meetings. This would also serve as an excellent time to tell those interested in leadership roles about the opportunity to be a part of the CIAT, and to advise their children of the opportunity to become involved with the YAC. The number of individuals reached each day of outreach should be documented by members of the CIAT, and efforts should be continued until at least 50% of the population has been reached. At each of the community meetings, sign-in sheets could be distributed to all in attendance, asking for the individual's name and identified ethnicity. This should be completed at each meeting, and tracked over time to see if the number of Latino individuals in attendance is increasing.

Indicators of success

Our short-term outcomes will indicate whether steps are being taken to reach the long-term outcomes. If the short-term outcomes are reached, the long-term outcomes will be much more obtainable. The outcomes are all measurable. Generally, evaluation of the previously listed outcomes will require obtaining information from membership rosters and attendance sheets to indicate whether desired numbers have been reached.

Once the CIAT agrees to help with the creation of a YAC to work with them, this will be the first indicator of success. In order to create and encourage more Latino youth representation, a short-term indicator of success will be obtaining a membership which has at least 20% of members identifying as Latino. By having each new member fill out a membership form, it would be relatively easy for the CIAT to track how many members identify as Latino. The CIAT will help the needs of the youth community be heard, and can help guide them to become

more involved in the community and schools. It is also hoped that the creation of a strong youth council will create strong leaders who may strive for seats on the CIAT in the future.

After the CIAT and mayor understand the importance, and agree to have two seats available for Latino members on the team, the next indicator of success would be the appointment of the individuals to the seats. This could be accomplished through an election or volunteers who would like to take on the position. Through the outreach efforts previously described, it is hoped that interested individuals will come forward and take advantage of this opportunity. The appointment of two Latino representatives to the CIAT indicates that steps are being taken in the right direction to ensure that this representation is carried over into the future and that the needs of the Latino community will continue be heard.

The Blue Zones project is making strides to involve more of the Latino population in the health initiatives in Muscatine. A short-term indicator of increased participation would be to have 10% of the Latino population involved in some form with the initiatives. Involving at least 10% of the population would be an encouraging start to the eventual desired outcome of at least 30% of the population expressing involvement. Through the door-knocking activities, Latino community members will learn not only about the Blue Zones project, but also community initiative meetings that they will have the opportunity to attend. Face-to-face communication was indicated as being much more favorable, rather than more formal methods, among Latino key informants, so it is hoped that this will serve as an effective way to increase awareness and attendance. A short-term indicator of success will be having at least 5% of those attending community initiative meetings identifying as Latino. This would be an encouraging step in right direction towards the long-term goal of 20%. We hope that these activities will sufficiently

allow us to reach our long-term outcomes, and increase Latino representation of all age groups in the community of Muscatine.

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Additional Resources on Youth Leadership

Institute of Medicine: Jóvenes Santos presentation

<http://www.iom.edu/Activities/PublicHealth/PopulationHealthImprovementRT/2014-APR-10/Videos/Panel%20I/5-Jovenes-Sanos-Video.aspx>

Jóvenes Sanos

<http://www.sanoshealth.com/>