Saratoga County

Collaborative Effort to Increase Vaccination Rates Among Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers

NEED

Saratoga County is home to over 700 backstretch workers who care for thoroughbred horses at the racetrack, as well as many migrant farm workers. These workers often face barriers to care that result in health disparities, such as lack of insurance, linguistic and cultural differences, and lack of documentation. In particular, infectious disease threatens the health of both migrant workers and those with whom they come in contact. According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, viral hepatitis, influenza, and tuberculosis (TB) are among the leading causes of illness and death in the United States. Unfortunately, the Migrant Clinicians Network reports that migrant workers are six times more likely than the general population to develop TB and tend to have low immunization rates, especially for pertussis and influenza.

ACTIVITY

In 2010, Saratoga County Public Health Services (SCPHS) partnered with Saratoga Hospital and the Backstretch Employee Assistance Team (B.E.S.T.), to include free immunizations and TB screening at the backstretch clinic. Two SCPHS nurses attend each clinic to administer immunizations, the cost of which is covered by the New York State Vaccines for Adult Program (VFA) for uninsured and underinsured adults, and conduct monthly TB screening. In 2014, SCPHS initiated field clinics at local dairy farms, offering immunization services at no cost through the VFA and Vaccines for Children (VFC) programs. B.E.S.T. and the Migrant Education Identification/Recruitment Program provide interpreters.

OUTCOMES

Left to right: Anne Burns-Franzese, RN, Part-time RN; Joanne Sweet, BSN, RN, PHN, IAP Coordinator; Joanne Killian, RN, Part-time RN; Jamie Berardi, RN, TB Coordinator; Renee Janack, BSN, RN, PHN, Lead Poisoning Prevention Coordinator; JoAnn Zornes, RN, STD Coordinator; Not pictured: Shana Phelan, RN, Part-time RN

Over the course of nine years at the backstretch, SCPHS has held more than 153 clinics, seen 678 patients, and administered 1,042 vaccines. In fact, SCPHS exceeded its 2018 goal of increasing backstretch clinic vaccination rates by 5% by a factor of four. Moreover, in the four years since starting the dairy farm program, SCPHS has treated 215 migrant dairy workers and administered 376 vaccinations. As a result, many of the backstretch and migrant dairy farm workers have completed their vaccine series over the past several years, permitting SCPHS to hold fewer clinics over time. By partnering with other organizations focused on addressing regional migrant worker social and health disparities, SCPHS is creating sustainable interventions that maximize limited resources and facilitate integrated delivery of primary and public health care.

GOAL

Given their high risk and isolation, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends increasing vaccination rates among migrant farm workers through targeted outreach. By partnering with the backstretch clinic and visiting local dairy farms, SCPHS has increased the number of migrant workers who are fully immunized, receive regular flu vaccinations, and receive testing and treatment for tuberculosis. Moreover, SCPHS' manpower and access to government-funded vaccines contribute to the sustainability of the backstretch clinic.

SUCCESSES

In 2019, SCPHS will celebrate its 10th year of participating in backstretch clinics during an extended racetrack season that will host more clinics than ever, maintain its migrant dairy farm clinics, and build relationships with local orchard operators so as to extend on-site vaccination clinics to migrant orchard workers in the county.

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