

Champlain Valley Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

2012 Summer SEARCH Projects

Contact: Judy Wechsler, CVAHEC 92 Fairfield St. St. Albans VT 05478 JWechsler@cvahec.org 527-1474 ext. 211

Support and Services at Home (SASH)

Working with the Support and Services at Home (SASH) program of the Cathedral Square Corporation (CSC) at the Heineberg Senior Housing or another CSC senior housing community, participants in this evidence-based, multidisciplinary project will demonstrate that integration and delivery of individualized, comprehensive services to seniors in congregate housing can improve quality of life, as well as reduce the costs of services and health care for residents. SASH residents receive an in-depth assessment leading to a comprehensive and individualized healthy aging plan. In the summer of 2010, two health professions students, working as a SEARCH multidisciplinary team, will assist SASH through the following:

- Participation in services and activities with residents and staff, including weekly multidisciplinary team meetings
- Conducting ongoing health assessments with congregate housing residents, focused on emergency contacts and legal matters, self-perceived health status, medication, daily life activities, and nutrition, depression, and cognitive screening
- Investigating means of strengthening links between community-based primary care practitioners and the SASH team
- Working with the SASH project manager and a wellness nurse to modify or devise components of the SASH program, encouraging continuous quality improvement of the comprehensive, resident-focused healthy aging plan.

Linking Elders with Local Food for Better Health

The Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) is a health care program that helps older adults remain independent in their own homes. PACE provides direct medical service as well as home care, medications, nutritional counseling, transportation, social support, and more. PACE operates two centers in Vermont – one in Rutland (Rutland County) and one in Colchester (Chittenden County). Chittenden County in particular has long been a nationally-known stronghold for community-supported agriculture (CSA) and for sustainable agricultural initiatives in general. In this vision of agriculture, growers and food producers link to local consumers through restaurants, institutions, food retailers, human service agencies, and other community channels that “close the loop” in local food production, connecting food producers directly with people to provide them with fresh, nutritious, high-quality food and produce.

This SEARCH summer project seeks to connect Chittenden County elders to this innovative agricultural system. A pair of SEARCH scholars will work with PACE, Champlain Valley AHEC and other community collaborators to build upon last summer SEARCH efforts to identify, establish and promote links that improve the current food distribution systems for low-income elderly in Chittenden County. Specifically students will work to develop opportunities for local and in house food production that serves to stimulate participants’ interest and knowledge of food choice and preparation and to develop and

support related physical and social activities that reinforce the personal connection between food choices, local production and health benefits.

The Champlain Valley AHEC Cultural Competency Manual

The Champlain Valley Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Cultural Competency Manual provides health care practitioners in Vermont and beyond with a basic orientation to cultural competency in health care. It includes culturally and health-care-specific resources for refugee, new immigrant, and other special populations in Vermont. With the assistance of a SEARCH student, the current edition was substantially revised and updated in 2011 and will be issued in December. Incorporated into the manual are formatting and structural changes, new chapters on “Building a Culturally Competent Practice”, and additional chapters regarding Burmese and Chinese immigrant populations in VT. This year’s summer SEARCH 2012 project has two major objectives: 1) to update existing sections on Native American and African American populations in VT; and 2) to work with one or two new refugee or immigrant populations in Chittenden County to develop relevant resource information for the manual to assist primary care providers in addressing the health needs of this new population.

Health Care Access Guide for Latino Migrant Farm Workers

Latino migrant farm workers in Vermont face pressing and unique circumstances in their work environment, community, and day-to-day lives. They are often unseen, their presence unrecognized, yet they play a vital role in keeping Vermont dairy farms, a traditional mainstay in this rural state, economically viable. Latino migrant farm workers come to rural Vermont to earn a wage to support families back home. They do not intend to stay. Most Vermont farmers are happy to have them as they generally consider them to be hard-working and often cannot find other farm hands to do the work. These circumstances create unique challenges for accessing and addressing the health care needs of migrant farm workers.

Building on the efforts of a SEARCH 2011 project in Franklin County, CVAHEC is working with the Open Door Clinic (ODC) in Addison County and other community providers to develop a project with an appropriate role for two SEARCH students to address some of these unique needs. Students must be proficient in speaking Spanish and, at a minimum, will:

- Review current and relevant materials on health care issues for Latino migrant farm workers
- Meet with community organizations that provide or are in the position to provide services to this population, migrant workers, and farmers who employ Latino MFW
- Work with ODC and Bi State Primary Care to develop and administer a survey to assess the knowledge, level of comfort, and behavior changes of migrant farm workers in accessing healthcare in Addison County
- Develop a reference guide to healthcare access for Latino migrant farm workers in Addison County.