

Elevating our Engagement: An Evaluation of Launching a Community Board at a Student-Run Free Clinic

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Background

- Community Advisory Boards are prevalent and are a requirement of Federally Qualified Health Centers, with most staying true to "advising" levels of engagement
- DAWN is a 501(c)(3), interprofessional Student-Run Free Clinic (SRFC) that provides primary care to uninsured patients in Aurora, CO
- There is no literature describing feasibility or models of community board formation at a SRFC
- In Fall 2017, DAWN decided to establish a community board to improve its responsiveness to community needs, and develop a sustainable partnership
- Best practices for community board formation were established using literature and expert interviews
- A resultant core value was to facilitate an environment of group self-determination and a high level of engagement between DAWN and the board, aiming for "shared decision making and work" (*grounded in Hart's Ladder of Participation*)
- The Community Leaders of DAWN (CLD) group was created in October 2018 with a mission statement of "Community leaders partnering with DAWN to promote healthy communities in Aurora"

Objective

- To evaluate the process and outcomes of the initial launch of the Community Leaders of DAWN



Methods

Community Leaders of DAWN Design

- Kick-off with an eight-hour training day: group norms and project objectives established, leadership skills training, team building exercises
- Monthly two hour meetings to run between December 2018–October 2019: identification of community needs, discussion of project ideas, identification of first CLD project in March 2019
- Expert facilitation with translations in English and Spanish

Continuous Evaluation

- Pre-post surveys
- Focus groups with CLD members and CLD Planning Committee
- Analysis conducted after first four monthly meetings
- CLD Member key-informant interviews (future)
- Student-leader post-participation survey (future)

Results

Demographics

Age	Range: 26 – 53 years (Mean: 42.8 years)
Self-Described Race/Ethnicity	4 – Mexican, 1 – Sudanese, 1 – Black, 1 – Caucasian, 1 – Hispanic
Country of Birth	5 – Mexico, 1 - Saudi Arabia, 1 – Nigeria, 1 – USA
Years Lived in USA	Range: 3 – 53 years (Mean: 22.0 years)
Preferred Spoken Language	3 – Spanish, 2 – English & Spanish, 2 – English, 1 – Ibo
Other Languages Spoken	2 – English, 1 – Arabic

Quantitative Process and Outcomes Measures

	Post Training (mean)	3 Month (mean)		Baseline (mean)	Post Training (mean)	3 Month (mean)
PROCESS MEASURES			OUTCOMES MEASURES			
Able to share opinions*	4.6	4.1	I am a leader in my community**	3.5	3.3	3.3
CLD is making its own decisions**	3.4	3.6	I am comfortable talking with others about community needs**	3.6		3.4
I understand my role in the group**	3.4	3.5	Confident I have the skills to create a project addressing a community need**	3.1		3.4
My time is respected**	3.6	3.5	Confident I can identify the community's most important health needs**		3.1	3.1
Unique backgrounds valued***	3.8	3.9	CLD is improving the health of Aurora**		3.5	3.0
Different languages valued***	3.8	4.0				

*5-point Likert Scale: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

**4-point Likert Scale: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree

***4-point Likert Scale: 1-Poor, 2-Fair, 3-Good, 4-Excellent

Themes

Feedback for Improvement

Create central method of communication and utilize it regularly (WhatsApp)

"Create group chat about timing, location...or other happenings within the group." (CLD Member)

Increased accountability would be helpful to ensure group progress

"For those that are not as engaged, we [will] talk to them one-to-one about if they are interested in participating. If the answer is yes, then we need to talk about the set meetings/calling in if they can't come." (CLD Planning Committee Member)

What is Working Well

Intentional attention to language (English/Spanish) with interpretation

"I really liked the thoughtful split of English/Spanish and think that was appreciated by Spanish speaking only members." (CLD Planning Committee member)

Group has a sense of connection

The connection we have as a group [is the most valuable part of the work], even though everyone hasn't come, we are all connected...you're like the base foundation and we are like the stairs." (CLD Member)

Using technology to bring the group together

"Even though only 2 people showed up, we accomplished a lot! Using the media, email, texting." (CLD Member)

What We Are Getting Out of Project

Learning and acknowledging what it looks like to work with the community and not to expect "perfection"

"I think in community organizing, it's pretty normal to not get everyone attending every single meeting. More than 50% [attendance] is good...I think quality over quantity is a good idea to be had and we shouldn't be discouraged." (CLD Planning Committee Member)

Themes Continued

Family feel

"We are a family and we are a great team. And even though people are not here, I feel like people are still engaged and participating." (CLD Member)

Satisfaction from being able to help the community

"That it is going to affect people one day in a positive way, I hope." (CLD Member)

Appreciate productive and exciting feel of the work

"[I] loved getting to the idea phase, getting encouraged and excited by that" (CLD Planning Committee Member)



Discussion

- Decrease in some quantitative measures on survey
- Observed disconnect between some survey and qualitative findings
- May be due to:
 - Initial excitement of kickoff day and subsequent shorter meetings
 - One member who missed kickoff and has only attended one meeting
 - Not enough time to see change over time
 - Survey questions may not represent phenomena happening in group
- Keys for success have been flexibility, facilitation, leveraging technology, and building relationships

Limitations

- Small sample size (n = 8)
- Completion of some baseline surveys after initial training session
- CLD focus group not conducted after 12/8 meeting due to time constraints
- Variable in-person attendance at CLD meetings – not all CLD members were represented in end of meeting focus groups

Next Steps

- Utilize standing focus groups to reflect back results thus far, and glean insight into disconnect between survey and thematic findings
- Continue evaluation of year-long launch of CLD, conduct key-informant interviews with members, and anonymous student exit surveys
- Evaluate sustainability of CLD