

# 2014 Minority Health Month Advocate for Better Health in Your Community

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# Advocacy:LULAC Health Ambassadors

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Through carefully planned advocacy and strategic efforts LULAC advocates and Health Education Ambassadors can impact and influence laws and public policies that directly affect people's lives. As a leader within your community you have the ability to create social change by highlighting critical issues, arousing public interest and influencing legislation.

## WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is the focused effort of an individual or group to influence public-policy within political and economic systems. The power of advocacy lies in the organization and mobilization of large groups of people. Advocacy can be targeted on a local, state or national governmental level or other decision making body such as a school board.

You, as advocates, can develop coalitions and grassroots organizations which can play a large role in influencing legislation in your area. By skillfully communicating with legislators, your group can improve the outcomes of the legislative processes in favor of your goals. There are four main avenues for advancing your agenda: legislators, the legislative staff, the press, and the public. Your effectiveness as an advocate depends on your ability to persuade these people to support your position.

## COALITION BUILDING

A coalition is a group of individuals or organizations that are focused on a specific issue, have a clearly defined goal, and work together to stimulate change. When developing your coalition try to make it as broad and diverse as possible. There are four steps you will want to follow when developing a coalition:

1. Build the coalition. Contact people you know first. Request their support and then ask them to review and give input on your list of other possible participants. Grow your constituency.
2. Define the issue. Develop goals that are shared by all the members of your group and ensure that they have been clearly stated. This manual can act as a guide to develop specific and achievable goals.
3. Identify the target audience. Who is the base of your support? Who is the opposition's base of support? Who is impacted by the legislation you are considering?
4. Design and implement an action plan. A timeline with a list of responsibilities provides an outline of activities and deadlines that can help you to reach your goal.

Based on the participants and the political environment of your state your coalition may evolve in different ways. Any group can be effective as long as the focus is on building and maintaining relationships while keeping your collective purpose in mind. Regardless of its size or scope, a successful coalition depends on an efficient system of communication. Coalition members may have their own goals or agendas and varying levels of commitment and involvement. For this reason LULAC National Staff are available to help develop and support a coordinated plan of action. The strength of the Latinos Living

Healthy team and the Health Education Ambassadors is in working towards optimizing the flow of energy towards the shared objective.

## WORKING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

With your support, LULAC and the Latinos Living Healthy team were able to support the passage of the President's health care reform bill. Moving forward, our biggest role will be to raise awareness among local and state elected officials on the importance of the continued support for the benefits that will become available through this law. As you may know, many Latinos are uninsured and in need of preventative routine health care. It is our responsibility to support the development of the system that will reduce health disparities and to educate community members on how to use this system.

Before scheduling any meetings with your Legislators, get to know them. Acquaint yourself with their biographies, districts, policy interests, community interests, and then find interests that you share. Once you feel confident that you are familiar with their backgrounds decide what approach you will take in communicating with them, direct (face-to-face) or indirect (written). Many have found that combining these two styles makes the greatest impact.

Here are a few tips to maintaining existing relationships with Legislators:

- Always be professional and make the most of every encounter.
- Develop long term relationships.
- Never whine, threaten or talk badly about the opposition.
- Never personalize differences of opinion.
- Never misrepresent facts.

## Who to connect with

In order to create the most successful campaign, focus your coalition's efforts in the most beneficial direction. Legislators will generally fall into three categories:

1. **Someone who supports your position** – Many states and their representatives already support all aspects of health reform implementation. Do not focus too much effort on these individuals as it is very unlikely that they can be persuaded to back out of the process or change positions.
2. **Someone who is undecided** – These individuals should get the majority of your attention as their support may be obtained. States and their legislators that have agreed to implement the basic requirements of the law or partner with the federal government to set up health insurance exchanges may still be persuaded of the importance of all additional aspects of the health care reform movement.
3. **Someone who is against your position** – Analyze their voting record on similar issues to see how they have voted in the past. Focus your efforts on these individuals in accordance with your findings. Dissension between legislators in your state could lead to opportunities to garner support from a majority that could pressure others. Some decision makers may support other minority

health programs but may not be well informed on the importance this new law has to our growing constituency.

Do not underestimate the power of legislative staff. Another great way to make an impact is to influence the senior members who support the political officials. If you don't get through to the representative or legislator, don't miss the opportunity to talk to the individuals that provide huge behind-the-scenes support.

### A Simple Guide for Face-to-Face Meetings

- ✓ Call and make an appointment.
- ✓ Put together a delegation. This will show that you have a diverse group of supporters who are committed to the issue.
- ✓ Be prepared for the meeting. Do your research and establish your agenda and goals.
- ✓ Be on time, concise and accurate. Create a local angle and press for a commitment.
- ✓ Follow-up after the meeting.
- ✓ Develop a long term relationship.



## A Sample Letter to Governor/Legislature

[Date]

TO:

FR:

RE:

Dear [State Leader],

My name is [Insert Your Name] and I am from [Insert Your City, State.] As your constituent and a concerned citizen, I write to **urge you to PROTECT [Insert Health Issue]** to increase health coverage and awareness for Latino communities.

Through the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2014, it was possible for 10.2 Latinos to have access to medical insurance coverage and medical services. However, this does not overshadow the prominent issues that Latinos suffer from on a constant basis. As a major minority group, Latinos are those that are vulnerable to unequal treatment.

**[State issue and provide more detail on its importance with 2-3 sentences.]** This issue is specifically important for Latinos who are widely under-represented in health.

**[Provide examples and statistics to further prove your point. This should be done in 3-5 sentences.]**

On behalf of LULAC council # [ XXX ] and the community of [insert your city, state, or region] I ask that you consider these facts when voting on legislation that would support the state control of [insert health issue.] We are happy to offer our support and assistance in all discussions supporting these priorities. If you have any questions regarding the above request you may contact [name of contact, phone number and email address]. Please visit <http://lulac.org/health> for more information.

Thank you for your support.

## WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

You have likely used mass media to support community organizing and to advance a policy initiative. Strategic use of the media can bring issues and policy solutions to the attention of the community and decision-makers. There are many benefits to using available media outlets, such as television, print, radio, and internet, to educate the public if you wish to supplement your campaign.

The topic of health care laws and exchanges can be highly technical and very confusing, for professionals as well as community members. Levels of health literacy will affect the reception of your message. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, Title V, defines health literacy as the degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions. The goal of this campaign is to present the information in a way that is easily understandable and where it will be most accessible to people so that Latinos take full advantage of the new services available to them.

## PLANNING AN EVENT

The major and most effective tool to reach your community will likely be in-person educational events. Before beginning detailed preparations for a community event it is helpful to have an idea of the atmosphere within which you will be working, and no one knows the local environment better than you. Work to identify others that have a vested interest in the welfare of your audience (healthcare workers, community leaders, church leaders, local business owners and other Latinos in the community) who might get involved in your event. Make sure that you are aware of attitudes, obstacles, available information and other current efforts within the community that can either enhance or hinder your efforts.

After you have developed this network, start to spread awareness about the issue. Distribute flyers, brochures, and posters about new health care resources for the Latino population in your state (LULAC National staff can assist in material development). It may also be important to address concerns of privacy and specific consumer rights under the new system. This will create an atmosphere where community members will feel that they can actively participate in the implementation and enrollment processes.

Once you enter into the planning stages of our event meet with local elected officials and partner organizations or companies who might be interested in promoting or sponsoring your event. Consider details such as how many people you would like to attend and who will they be, whether or not you will be providing food and/or entertainment. Also, consider having a photographer to capture/record the event. The Latinos Living Healthy Team would love to highlight your efforts on the LULAC National Health website. Please keep in mind that we need you to evaluate the success of your event and provide documentation of attendance and participation to Latinos Living Healthy in order to support the Health Education Ambassador program.

Following the event, revisit the goals that you had set to determine if they were met. Don't forget to send thank you notes to everyone who was involved in assisting you with preparations, execution, or publicity. LULAC National staff can assist you with any questions you may have while planning or organizing your local or regional events.

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## SUMMARY

The Latinos Living Healthy Health Education Ambassador campaign aims to connect target communities with trusted community leadership in order to raise awareness of the process of participating in new health care service opportunities and programs. With implementation of all provisions of the Affordable Care Act beginning in 2014, and open enrollment in health care exchanges beginning in October, 2013 it is essential for Latinos to be comfortable with these new systems. Health Education Ambassadors will directly educate their communities with support from LULAC and federal and state health agencies. Ambassadors can register online at <http://lulac.org/health/> and are encouraged to contact the LULAC National office for additional information on expectations, responsibilities, and benefits.

# Health Ambassador Curriculum

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LULAC National will support Health Education Ambassadors and their respective LULAC Councils in a concerted effort to raise awareness within Latino communities and to design and implement localized solutions that address the critical need for health care. An important goal of this program is to give LULAC Councils the flexibility to design frameworks that take into account their respective health issue concerns, available resources, and existing support systems.

By supporting, engaging, and training specialized community leaders, the Latino Living Healthy Initiative will improve the health of Latino communities across the nation. Studies show that many of the health issues faced by Latinos such as obesity, diabetes, HIV, and cancer are preventative and can be successfully treated if detected early. As a Health Education Ambassador you will represent LULAC Councils' community involvement and local insights for successful implementation of programs that address access to, and quality of, affordable health care for all Americans.

In this role you will serve as the key link between national health care resources and community members. LULAC National requires that all Health Ambassadors complete a set of basic activities and report the outcomes and attendees. By providing the following information about your work LULAC is able to provide opportunities for funding and support that the work being done at the local level.

## 1. **Events**

\_\_\_ 3 health education sessions with minimum of 20 participants at each (*limited funds are available for refreshments, venue fees, and printing – with prior approval from LNO*)

\_\_\_ Distribution of LLH materials and any local materials at each event

## 2. **Reporting and Communication**

Submission of all reporting materials on time

\_\_\_ Submit two progress evaluations at dates to be determined by Ambassador and LNO staff

\_\_\_ 1 Needs Assessment Survey of a minimum of 50 respondents, within one month prior to first event - Can be set up on paper and/or online (*LNO can provide draft*)

\_\_\_ Conference calls will be held regularly to ensure direct contact with LNO regarding planning of events

\_\_\_ Submit all sign in sheets, RSVP forms or lists of attendees within one week of each event

\_\_\_ Submit all post-event evaluations and comment forms within one week of each event



## RESOURCES

League of United Latin American Citizen's Health Webpage [www.lulac.org/health](http://www.lulac.org/health)

U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services <http://www.medicaid.gov/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services <http://www.healthcare.gov/index.html>

Pew Research Hispanic Center <http://www.pewhispanic.org>

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