CASE STUDY: California Department of Aging

Access to timely data leads to $2.3 million in funding

About The California Department of Aging (CDA)

The California Department of Aging (CDA) administers programs that serve older adults, adults with disabilities, family caregivers, and residents in long-term care facilities throughout the state. The Department administers funds allocated under the federal Older Americans Act, the Older Californians Act, and through the Medi-Cal program. The Department’s mission is to promote the independence and well-being of older adults, adults with disabilities, and families through:

- Access to information and services to improve the quality of their lives;
- Opportunities for community involvement; and
- Support from family members providing care.

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Background: Helping seniors to manage their own care

The elderly frequently suffer as a result of a lack of education on how to monitor and manage their own health. As a result, older Californians are unable to effectively manage pain, fatigue, their weight and many other common issues. They struggle with depression and too often worry about how to correctly use their medication without a helping hand.

In 2006, the California Department of Aging applied for a grant from the federal Administration on Aging that would fund a program to help thousands of these senior citizens cope with chronic health conditions and the difficulties of old age.

The program adopted as its model the Stanford University Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP), an evidence-based health promotion program for older adults with chronic disabilities. CDSMP provides an intensive workshop held within affected communities for two and a half hours, once a week, for six weeks. While in this program, seniors learn techniques to deal with problems like fatigue, pain, and isolation. They learn to improve their health with exercise, proper medication usage and improved nutrition. Seniors develop strategies to evaluate new treatments and effectively communicate with their family, friends and personal physician.

CHIS Data Usage: Quick, credible, data powers a grant proposal

Department officials had less than a month to put together a significant federal grant proposal that would demonstrate a clear need for an elder-care self-management program in California.
"The California Health Interview Survey provided a powerful medium to convey the realities of life in California," said Lora Connolly, the Department’s Acting Director. “Folks in Washington think of us as happy, healthy, and jogging. In reality, there is great variation throughout the state and many people are suffering.”

Using CHIS data, researchers found that approximately 43 percent of seniors suffered from a disability, 53 percent had hypertension, and 57 percent were coping with arthritis. Rates are significantly higher in the Central Valley and other high-risk areas.

“CHIS data strengthened our grant proposal significantly and allowed us to fund a critical public service,” Connolly said.

Importantly, this valuable data was available on a user-friendly, easily-searchable website which made it easy for Connolly and her staff to quickly find the statistics they needed while working within a tight turnaround grant-writing period.

"CHIS data helped us most by allowing our team to quickly view statistics on a wide range of health topics," said Connolly. “Without access to CHIS we would have never had enough time to pull that information together."

Impact: More than 10,000 seniors reached
In part as a result of the Department’s utilization of CHIS, the Self-Management program has received nearly $2.3 million dollars in federal funding since 2006. Over 10,000 seniors’ have enrolled in the program. According to one recipient, “The workshop put me back in charge of my life, and I feel great. I only wish I had done this sooner.”

Insight: CHIS provides quick, credible data
The California Health Interview Survey is the state’s most comprehensive source of health data. It is also presented and disseminated in a variety of user-friendly ways – through reports and publications, online tools (such as AskCHIS), and through downloadable Public Use Files (PUFs) that make it easy for researchers to quickly access the data they need, when they need it. Without CHIS, state administrators would waste unnecessary man-hours scouring multiple sources for data.

About CHIS
CHIS is the nation’s largest state health survey. A random-dial telephone survey conducted on a continuing basis on a wide range of health topics, CHIS data gives a detailed picture of the health and health care needs of California’s large and diverse population.

CHIS is conducted by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research in collaboration with the California Department of Public Health and the Department of Health Care Services.

Learn more
To learn more about CHIS, please visit our website:
www.chis.ucla.edu

To learn more about how data from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) and research produced by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research are making a difference in the health of Californians and our nation, visit our “Making an Impact” webpage:
www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/impact

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