

QUALITATIVE SNAPSHOT

QUARTER FOUR 2023

CENTER FOR
**COMMUNITY
HEALTH**
ALIGNMENT

The Upstate Family Resource Center Boiling Springs, South Carolina

This snapshot provides a glimpse into the work of community health workers (CHWs) at the Upstate Family Resource Center (UFRC) in Boiling Springs, South Carolina.

The first section describes an encounter between Leonor, a CHW at the center, and a local mother.

Results:

Maria's child Ernesto received an ASQ developmental assessment. Maria received information about developmental milestones and how to continue helping the baby development, parenting tips, enrolled in WIC, joined the From One Women to Another support group for more information on family planning and emotional support, was introduced to resources for the entire family like access to vaccines, free vision assessments and glasses, and got assistance with a SNAP application. Maria continues to attend a Spanish-language breastfeeding support group every month, sharing her experiences, challenges, and strengths with other moms to ensure continued good nutrition for her baby. The family has invited more community members to be part of the center's programs.

A CHW Supports the Whole Family

After completing an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)¹ with Maria and her infant Ernesto, Leonor leaves and quickly returns with information on the UFRC's programs, detailing them to Maria. Maria asks questions about Medicaid. Leonor explains there are two types of Medicaid: regular and emergency. Maria asks the difference between Medicaid and AccessHealth, which Leonor briefly explains. Maria mentions her other child, Julio, needs to visit a dentist. Leonor notes the child's name, asking if Julio has gone to a dentist recently. Leonor mentions Julio may be able to access free dental care through Healthy Smiles. She offers to call together with Maria to make an appointment. The mother remarks that Julio also has difficulty seeing the board. Leonor notes the woman's address, school district, Julio's grade, and phone number. She asks if Maria is familiar with Lion's Club. Maria remarks she isn't. Leonor states they may be able to provide free glasses for Julio.

The remainder of the appointment is spent collecting household information. When Maria mentions the children's ages, Leonor looks up from her notepad, smiling as she says she remembers them from a back to school fair where the center gave away backpacks and school supplies. Occasionally, Leonor pauses, reminding Maria that her information is confidential, she is only working to determine program eligibility. Leonor finishes by asking the household income and average cost for phone service, electricity, internet, water, transportation, and food. Leonor closes by asking if Julio's eyes have been dilated before and confirms that Maria has her phone number.



¹ The Ages and Stages Questionnaire is a nationally recognized tool for detecting developmental delays in children 0-5.

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This section examines select quotes from our interviews with the UFRC staff.

Like in the vignette above, Leonor described the trust she builds with community members

"I try to help them relate to me. Sometimes I say, 'Ahh, I'm a mother and I've also been through that' or 'Ah, I'm also Mexican and I didn't know where to bring my son to the doctor either. It's like drawing them in without going into too many details...we connect because we've been in the same place or in the same situation..." [translated]

Asked about the work of CHWs, the center's director, Elizabeth, also spoke about the value of trust

"...relationship is really important in that CHW role. One way that they build trust very quickly is the CHW's ability to connect culturally. They have the lived experience of the families...common language, somewhat common culture... they build trust through... being...empathetic, understanding...the issues that families struggle with and being able to connect them..." [original]

Asked about the role of CHWs in community, Sofia, Leonor's supervisor, described CHWs work to understand needs

"... an important part of [this work] is to build trust with the community that they're serving so that they feel free to express their needs when [CHWs] are supporting them they feel confident to say, 'You know what? Now, this happened to me.' Part of our job is following up with families. So we have to make sure that things go well and if they don't, we have to think about what we're going to do to make them happen." [translated]

Sofia described how, through the trusting relationships CHWs build with participants, they connect them to a variety of resources

"We refer families to health services, but also receive referrals from hospitals and clinics. We work with them to connect mothers with prenatal care, submit emergency Medicaid applications so they have coverage at the hospital when they give birth..." [translated]

A CHW builds community trust & relationships

Leonor similarly remarked on the bidirectionality of referrals to and from local care providers

"...it has been a little surprising that the hospital also refers people to us. Why? Because they have placed emphasis on the fact that it's not just a language barrier, but also that participants follow up with us because of our cultural competencies." [translated]

Partnerships with local organizations have sprouted from relationships that CHWs build with pregnant mothers

"We've detected more needs...working with pregnant people... postpartum depression has come up... we knew that it existed, but before we hadn't seen such a need to help individuals...we now have a support group guided by a therapist in Spanish." [translated]

Leonor also detailed how CHWs at the UFRC work to promote self-efficacy among program participants

"We referred a family with a small child to Prisma Health. This family completed an application for financial assistance for a surgery their child desperately needed... I instructed them that if there isn't someone that speaks Spanish, they should ask for an interpreter...they must provide you with an interpreter." [translated]

Leonor reported common questions that arise from community members after she's built trust

"Generally, families tell me that they don't know how or where to make an appointment. After establishing trust they'll say, 'I didn't understand the doctor.' or 'can you help me with something?'" [translated]

This snapshot is part of a larger qualitative study that the Center for Community Health Alignment (CCHA) is conducting with CHWs involved in the CHWs Changing Outcomes in South Carolina program. The study involves semi-structured interviews in English and Spanish and ethnographic fieldnotes collected to capture vignettes like the one featured above.