

4th Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards Nomination Form

Category: ISC#9 Tier 3
Innovations In Services to Customers

Project Title: Improving Food Stamp Outreach to Seniors

- 1. Project/Program Summary:** Briefly summarize the project's history, purpose, timeline and budget. In November, 2005, the Food Stamp program decided to focus on improving outreach, especially outreach targeted to seniors who might be eligible for NC's Simplified Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). Staff created fact sheets and brochures and made contacts with local senior apartment communities. To date, nine of seventeen public housing complexes serving seniors have been visited and presentations made to seniors. SNAP and regular Food Stamp applications are taken on site along with Life Line applications. This has helped to serve seniors who may have difficulty getting in to the DSS office because of lack of transportation or health issues. Today, DSS is using an Outreach Team made up of lead workers and specified workers. Over 150 people have attended community meetings, and 107 Food Stamp applications have been taken with an increase of issuance of \$1,884 monthly. The Department has publicized the availability of the outreach team on our website. No additional funds were needed to fund this project.
- 2. Innovation:** Why is the program unique? How does your project differ from similar projects? This project provides hands-on services to a very vulnerable population. It has enabled DSS to reach more rural parts of the county that where some of the apartment complexes are located and is providing better services to a population that has difficulty reaching the DSS central office location. To our knowledge there are no similar outreach projects targeted to this population.
- 3. Project Success and Impact:** What were the objectives? How well were they met? How widespread is the impact of the project/program? What is the anticipated long-term impact? Did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc.? Describe the outcome of the collaboration. The objectives of the program were to provide better services to elderly and to improve the Food Stamp participation rate. While improvement in the Food Stamp participation rate can not be attributed to this targeted outreach effort, the emphasis out outreach has had a positive effect overall encouraging other outreach opportunities. The project has resulted in better service to the elderly and an increase in regular Food Stamp applications from this population. It has resulted in increased collaboration with community partners.
- 4. Project Effort and Difficulty:** How well did the program use limited resources? What obstacles or challenges did you overcome? How was this done? The Food Stamp program staff has high case loads and has not had new staff added in some time. There were doubts about how whether this project would detract from processing services. Using lead workers helped. The Division Director moved a position to become the lead worker for the entire division to focus on outreach for many projects. This was one of the central decisions that led to success.
- 5. Ability to Replicate Project:** Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems? This project can be replicated by other

counties. Using leader workers to tackle outreach to a rather isolated population takes has worked well, especially the concept of dedicating one position to work on outreach for several programs within the Division. This is leading to better service and improved coordination with partner agencies.