



Application for 2008 Outstanding County Program Awards

County (if multi-county entry, list all): Transylvania County

Submitted by: Steve Smith Title: Transylvania County Health Director

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The Association encourages electronic submissions. E-mail the application and project/program description to Todd McGee at todd.mcgee@ncacc.org. You can also fax your entry to (919) 733-1065 (attn. Todd McGee), or mail it to: NCACC, 215 N. Dawson St., Raleigh, NC 27603. Applications must be postmarked by **Friday, March 6, 2009**.

Projects/programs must have been implemented between Jan. 1, 2007, and Dec. 31, 2008. For additional information and category criteria, visit www.ncacc.org/awards/ocpa/about.html.

Project title: School site influenza vaccination initiative (FluMist® Campaign)

Category (you may check more than one):

General Government Human Services Public Information/Participation

Address each of the following questions in a typed program/project summary in a separate Word document attached to this application form. Limit your responses to two pages. Use single-spaced lines and 12-point, Times New Roman font. Supporting materials may be submitted, but due to time constraints, judges may not review the materials.

1. What are the purpose, history, timeline and budget of the program/project? Will the county realize any projected cost savings? (For public information/participation programs, please try to estimate participation levels).
2. What makes the program/project unique? How does it differ from similar projects in your county or in other counties?
3. How well did the program use available resources, given the limitations on such resources?
4. Can this project be duplicated in other counties? If another county wanted to do a similar project, what advice would you give them to minimize obstacles and problems?
5. How did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, jurisdictions, nonprofits, businesses, etc.? How well did this collaboration work and is it on-going?



Transylvania County Department of Public Health

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Transylvania County – School site influenza vaccination initiative (FluMist® Campaign)

1. The population of children in any given community has long been regarded as the primary transmission vector for various communicable diseases. Influenza is the primary example of this “child based” disease transmission concept. Public health has demonstrated multiple models that support mass vaccinations of children to provide a degree of “herd immunity” for the rest of the community. The basic intent is to disrupt or negate the transmission cycle fostered by children. This doesn’t eliminate disease from the community, but short circuits transmission cycles and substantially limits the incidence of influenza for all ages.

In 2009, the NC Division of Public Health initiated discussions via their Immunization Branch to explore the possibility of school site based influenza vaccination campaigns utilizing FluMist®. There are several inherent advantages with this product because it is administered as a nasal spray vs. a typical injection. This diminishes the typical aversion that parents and children alike may have to an injectable vaccine and administration is very simple. There is also early data that suggests the vaccine creates immunity in a shorter timeframe is more effective than traditional vaccines even if the strain match is less than ideal.

Transylvania County requested to be a part of this initial pilot project and was included. Expenses were primarily associated with public health staff time (3 school nurses, nursing supervisor and a contract nurse) since the FluMist® product was provided free (by the Immunization Branch) for all students in the county. The project was supported and promoted by the Transylvania County Board of Health, Transylvania County Board of Education, Transylvania County Schools Administration, Transylvania County Department of Public Health and the medical community at large. The project was initiated in October and concluded in December (2008). Vaccination clinics were provided at 10 separate school sites.

Uptake rates were exceptional . . .54% for elementary school students, 45% for middle school students, 28% for high school students. The overall uptake rate was 43% with 1636 students out of 3805 taking advantage of the vaccination clinics at the schools. The quantification of cost savings will center around evaluation of decreased absences for students and teachers during the school year. State funding per pupil is influenced in part by days of attendance so substantial decreases with absences would improve the amount of state funding achieved within a school system. Since the flu season has not yet ended, no evaluation of absentee rates has occurred to date. It is significant to note that several school systems in adjacent counties are currently experiencing elevated absentee rates due to flu like illness and to date, Transylvania County Schools has only experienced typical levels of absences.

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2. The program is unique because vaccinations were provided at school sites and exclusively utilized FluMist® in those settings. Injectable vaccine was provided in a separate clinic at the health department for those children having contraindications for the FluMist® product. It is the first occasion that FluMist® has been utilized in North Carolina in a mass vaccination application. Evaluation of this project will provide critical information for possible expansion of the initiative in the future.
3. Utilization of existing staff was the primary resource input for our jurisdiction. The demand for staff time necessitated shifting of some other priorities and incorporating some limited contract time from a retired public health nurse, but was relatively minimal given the scope of the project. Acquisition of the FluMist® product at no charge (provided by the NC Immunization Branch) was the principal advantage and avoided cumbersome and ineffective processes for collecting and billing a multitude of payor sources (insurance companies, etc.).
4. Duplication of the initiative would involve coordination with the NC Immunization Branch and the provision of free FluMist® vaccine. It is unknown at this time if the NC Division of Public Health will be able to garner ongoing financial support to continue (or expand) the project in the future. Alternatives to this model will be considered including the possibility of cost sharing.
5. Collaboration was the primary strength of the initiative and included representation from the NC Division of Public Health, NC Immunization Branch, Transylvania County Board of Health, Transylvania County Board of Education, Transylvania County Schools Administration, Transylvania County School Health Advisory Council, Transylvania County Department of Public Health and the medical community at large. The community was appreciative of the opportunity to participate in the project and dedicated the necessary resources to ensure its success. Our solid performance with outreach, community support and exceptional uptake rates should provide a foundation for consideration of promoting similar initiatives in the coming years. As further evaluation occurs, it is hoped that some level of quantification will be achieved for decreased absences and improved levels of state funding for school systems. Qualitative improvements are expected to include a lower incidence rate for influenza in the entire community (lower medical care costs) and improved academic success for the students due to fewer disruptions with their academic schedule. All of the stakeholders mentioned above continue to evaluate the project and are committed to promoting expansion of these vaccination opportunities in the future for other jurisdictions. Prevention is the focus for this effort and that represents the very essence of public health in North Carolina.