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Improving Reproductive Health Literacy Among Spanish-Speaking Immigrant Youth

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Abstract

This project focuses on providing standardized sexual and reproductive health education to Spanish-speaking undocumented, unaccompanied minors who are housed in the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Immigrant Youth Shelter at Morrison Child and Family Services (MCFS) in Portland, Oregon. It aims to address the unique challenges faced by these youth in accessing comprehensive reproductive health information and to fulfill requests from MCFS leadership regarding reproductive health education. Due to legislative constraints, MCFS staff have not been permitted to provide reproductive health supplies or education directly to immigrant youth, making these volunteer services especially necessary as this population is particularly vulnerable to adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

This work utilizes a standardized curriculum tailored to the needs of immigrant youth from Latin American countries ages 13-17 years, developed and implemented via collaborative efforts by MCFS staff and OHSU medical students. Taught in Spanish, the curriculum addresses three key reproductive health topics: reproductive anatomy and puberty, contraceptive methods, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). As each undocumented minor is only housed in the Immigrant Youth Shelter for a short amount of time while awaiting permanent placement, this intervention is designed to be delivered in three reproductive health classes that are administered on a weekly basis. The impact and subsequent development of the curriculum was assessed with both pre and post lesson quizzes to evaluate changes in knowledge and understanding of reproductive health among immigrant youth.

By providing standardized sexual and reproductive health education, this project aims to empower this population to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive well-being. The goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness of this curriculum so that the educational materials can be further developed and distributed to other youth shelters, improving health of immigrant communities by ensuring access to equal and essential reproductive health knowledge and resources.