

## Grant Outcomes Report

### **The Diversity Outreach Initiative: Building a More Diverse Pool of Blood Donors in New York City**

#### **The Problem:**

New York City suffers from an acute blood shortage: annually, 700,000 units (1 unit = 1 donation) are used, but fewer than 500,000 units are donated. To save lives, this shortfall must be reduced.

More specifically, 2006 usage patterns in some of the more vulnerable regions of New York City were:

- Bronx—57,000 units used, 13,000 units donated;
- Harlem & Washington Heights—24,000 units used, less than 5,000 units donated;
- South Jamaica, Queens—50,000 units used, less than 23,000 units donated; and
- Bedford/Stuyvesant, Brooklyn—60,000 units used, less than 33,000 units donated.

The New York Blood Center's (NYBC's) responsibility is to provide precise blood matches for all sickle cell anemia patients in the metropolitan area. These patients can develop stroke-threatening crises quickly. NYBC developed PreciseMatch<sup>®</sup> to identify precisely matched blood donors for chronically transfused individuals, including those with sickle cell anemia.

For the PreciseMatch<sup>®</sup> team to accomplish its goal, many more donations are needed from the African-American and Hispanic communities. Under this NYSHealth grant, NYBC sought to implement a new wide-ranging outreach program to significantly build the agency's capacity to deliver needed blood types. As a blood collection and processing agency, NYBC is uniquely positioned to educate and secure new blood donors.

#### KEY INFORMATION:

**GRANTEE**

New York Blood Center

**GRANT TITLE**

Diversity Outreach Initiative

**DATES**

January 1, 2009–August 19, 2010

**GRANT AMOUNT**

\$220,446

**FUNDING**

Special Opportunity Grant

## Grant Activities & Outcomes:

NYSHealth funds were used to hire staff members (three outreach coordinators), implement outreach activities, and develop materials to target diverse communities within Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx. These funds have also played an important role in leveraging government support from the New York City Council.

In order to have concrete targets to pursue, the outreach coordinators were assigned quarterly goals to collect 150 incremental units from African-American and Hispanic/Latino-American donors (50 incremental units per coordinator each month, totaling 2,100 units for the 14-month program period) in their designated borough. For this program, and in general, incremental units are defined in two ways:

- 1) By the difference in the number of African-American and Hispanic/Latino-American donors they recruited, relative to the same group blood drive run prior to the involvement of the outreach coordinator (also called an “incremental increase”); and
- 2) By the number of donors at any new groups running blood drives arranged by the outreach coordinator. This approach provided an incentive to work on cultivating new relationships that would result in drives, as well as support continuity of existing relationships.

Over the 14-month period of the NYSHealth grant, the work of the outreach coordinators resulted in 1,574 units of blood from new African-American and Hispanic/Latino-American blood donors. They did not quite reach the overall goal of 2,100 units from new African-American and Hispanic/Latino-American donors, but this goal was set with a work plan that included four outreach coordinators. NYBC was only able to hire three strong candidates in this position, which affected its ability to reach a large number of new donors. Its recruitment numbers also reflect some challenges in obtaining incremental units. In order to build the relationships developed with these new diverse donor groups, the coordinators continued to work with the groups after they ran their first blood drive, in addition to initiating new relationships with completely new groups. However, if these subsequent drives did not produce units from new African-American and Hispanic/Latino-American donors compared to the previous drive, the coordinators fell short of their recruitment goals during that month. Nevertheless, their efforts added a considerable number of rare donors to NYBC’s database and greatly helped fulfill the need for rare blood types, largely found in African-American and Hispanic/Latino-American communities, which is critical to meeting specific needs of all patients in the metropolitan area’s diverse communities.

NYBC and blood centers nationwide have faced many obstacles while trying to increase donation rates of African American and Hispanic/Latino Americans. Some of these include higher than normal deferral rates, mistrust of the medical community, inaccessible blood drives (very few blood drives running in these communities), and lack of education about the blood donation process and need for blood from particular ethnicities. Although the timeframe was inadequate for the three coordinators to fully meet their goals, they set forth and worked through some of these issues in the communities of New York City where these obstacles are abundant, particularly in Northern Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn.

PreciseMatch<sup>®</sup> developed a new bilingual educational brochure with funds provided by NYSHealth. The brochures feature three local Latino patients suffering from sickle cell disease. More than 10,000 brochures have been distributed at local events and blood drives since its creation in the summer of 2009. PreciseMatch<sup>®</sup> has received positive feedback on the brochures, such as donors feeling more compelled to donate after seeing the photo and reading the story of an actual patient in need of blood, and an appreciation of the Spanish language brochure. In addition to the new PreciseMatch<sup>®</sup> Spanish/English educational outreach brochures, NYBC has generated presentations and abundant press coverage to continue educating the local public and increasing the PreciseMatch<sup>®</sup> program's visibility.

## The Future:

Many lessons were learned from this project and many challenges have been presented to the PreciseMatch<sup>®</sup> team. Based on the relationships that have been built with support from NYSHealth, NYBC expects to see an increase in blood drives running within more diverse communities of New York City. Through continued education of key community leaders, persistent outreach, and an increasing presence in these targeted communities, NYBC expects to realize—and possibly exceed—the proposed original goal of obtaining additional collections from African-American and Hispanic/Latino-American donors. It will continue to focus on diverse recruitment while being careful to monitor the impact of its efforts compared with overall blood collections.

The Diversity Outreach Initiative has opened many doors and created opportunities for diversity recruitment at NYBC. Following the support of NYSHealth, the New York City Council (The Council) gifted over \$185,000 to further support diversity outreach and recruitment. The Council supported the creation of an outreach educational vehicle that will be used to provide information and education about blood donation and the need for more diverse blood donors in communities all over New York City. The Council's support of this program is a good use of funds that will help increase access to a vital resource—blood—for New York City's population.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### ABOUT THE GRANTEE

Established in 1964, the New York Blood Center is the largest community-based, nonprofit blood collection and distribution organization in the United States. Through the combined efforts of five geographic operations, NYBC annually (1) collects approximately 400,000 donations of blood and (2) distributes more than one million units of blood and blood components to nearly 200 hospitals throughout New York City, northern and central New Jersey, Long Island, and the Hudson Valley. The potential population served by NYBC totals close to 20 million people. NYBC remains dedicated to its mission of providing transfusion products to all in need, including: cancer and surgery patients, accident and burn victims, AIDS and sickle cell anemia patients, transplant recipients, hemophiliacs, and many others.

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