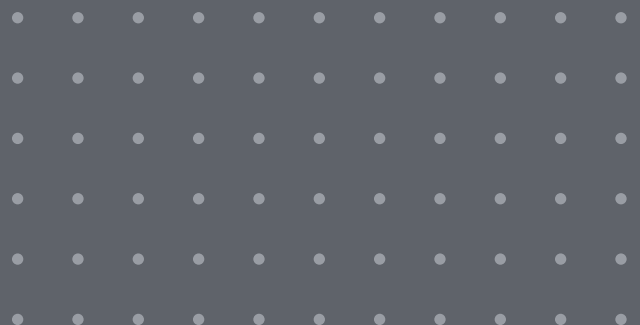




Integrating the Promotores Model to Strengthen Community Partnerships



This Best Practice Brief is part of series funded by **First 5 LA** in order to document effective community capacity building strategies that have been utilized in support of Best Start, a place-based initiative designed to catalyze, strengthen and elevate empowering and innovative approaches that improve the lives of children prenatal to age 5.



Introduction

This issue brief is meant to provide community leaders and their partner organizations with a deeper understanding of the Promotor Model, including its purpose, history, and contributions to community capacity building efforts. The brief provides details on the training members underwent to become effective Promotores and provides information about how the model was used for continued engagement.

Reflected in this brief are the experiences of the Best Start Wilmington Community Partnership and their use of this approach to help build the capacity of community members while also engaging members to participate in the Best Start community building process. This Brief highlights the work of members in the Wilmington community.

Co-authors of this brief are Lupe Gonzalez-Hernandez and Kara Coleman. Special thanks to them for their guidance, thought leadership, and writing of this piece.

This series of Best Practice Briefs were commissioned by First 5 LA's Best Start Communities Department and authored by members of CSSP's Partnership Support Capacity Building Team. The purpose of the series is to:

- Highlight Best Start capacity building strategies that have been most effective, in order to support Best Start community leaders as they continue this work and share lessons learned from LA's Best Start Community Partnerships with the broader field.
- Add the richness and depth of on-the-ground and recent experiences of community partnerships in Los Angeles to the existing knowledge around results-oriented community approaches to improve outcomes for young children and their families.
- Enhance understanding of what community-led, place-based initiatives require to succeed.
- Identify helpful lessons and recommendations that can be used to shape future community change efforts.

Together with First 5 LA, which is committed to ongoing learning and improvement, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) welcomes the opportunity to document and share impactful Best Start capacity building strategies with those who are leading the next phase of its development, as well as others in the broader community change field committed to better and more equitable outcomes for children and families. CSSP is a national policy, research, technical assistance organization whose mission is to help create a racially, economically, and socially just society in which all children and families thrive. CSSP has offices in LA, Washington, D.C., and New York.



Overview

Section I: Background

- Summarizes the purpose and origins of the Promotor Model, including its ties to Community Health Worker programs.
- Describes how the Promotor Model has been an effective approach for engaging Latino communities.
- Provides an overview of how Promotores are trained and compensated for their work.

Section II: Capacity Building in Action

- Describes how the Promotor Model was introduced to Best Start Wilmington (BSW).
- Provides an overview of BSW's process for selecting a trainer and the Promotor curriculum.
- Outlines the goals and training methods for BSW's Promotor certification process.
- Features reflective questions that can be used to determine if Promotor training is the right fit for a community partnership.
- Includes recommended strategies and action steps for supporting the success of Promotor trainings.

Section III: Major Reflections and Lessons Learned

- Summarizes key considerations for those interested in using the Promotor Model to support community work, along with lessons learned related to getting the most out of Promotor trainings.

Section IV: Recommended Resources

- Lists recommended reading, tools, and organizations that can serve as an additional resource for prospective or new Promotores as well as community partners.



Background

Promotores(as), or Community Health Workers (CHW), are community members who promote health in their own communities. When CHW are members of underserved populations, they often share a desire to improve conditions in their communities, so that children and their families might know a better way of life. For this reason, their work is often characterized as *servicio de corazón*—service from the heart.

Because Promotores typically work in communities where they live, they can build trusting relationships with fellow residents and share information about local resources and issues. As skilled advocates, they provide empowering leadership and peer education that fosters individual and community transformation.

Please Note: The following terms are used to describe capacity building activities in this document: *Promotor* (individual or male) or *Promotora* (female), *Promotores* (general plural term), and *Promotores de Salud* (general term for Health Promoters).

Origins of the Promotor Model

The Promotor Model referred to in this Best Practice Brief are based on **Community Health Worker (CHW) Programs** that have been established throughout the world since the 1920s. There are several different types of Community Health Worker models, which vary based on program goals and activities, as well as the communities being served. However, their common aim is to build community capacity through a range of activities, such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.

“Community Health Workers are effective because they use preexisting networks to include populations that have traditionally had poor access to community services and resources. The cultural capacity of these individuals allow them to deliver messages about available services in a way that is well received and less likely to be perceived as threatening.”

–MHP Salud

In the United States, CHWs work in diverse settings, including rural, urban, and metropolitan areas, as well as the Native American nations. Although their specific roles depend on the program setting, they most often engage marginalized communities that may have limited resources; lack access to health care information and services; or have cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors that are different from the dominant cultural norms. Within these communities, CHWs play a pivotal role in linking people to needed information and services, as well as providing information that may help systems provide more culturally appropriate supports.

CHWs typically have deep roots or strong social connections in the communities they serve. Often, they share similar life experiences, values, language, ethnicity, and socio-economic status with community members. This enables them to serve as trusted links between service providers and the community in order to increase individual and family access to needed resources.

Depending upon their role and locale, Community Health Workers (CHWs) are identified by different titles, including Promotores(as), community health advisors, outreach educators, lay health advocates, community resource persons, peer health educators, and village health workers (among many others). Paid or volunteer CHWs often serve others in collaboration with a wide array of organizations, including public health departments, nonprofits, hospitals, community-based organizations, and faith-based institutions. Through their affiliations, they conduct outreach and health education in individual homes, community centers, clinics, hospitals, schools, worksites, and shelters.

A Brief History of Community Health Workers

- Among the first Community Health Workers (CHWs) were malaria assistants trained in the late 1920s by senior health officers in South Africa and “Farmer Scholars” who were trained in China in the 1930s. Farmer Scholars preceded Barefoot Doctors, a term for Chinese agricultural laborers who engaged their fellow community members in taking responsibility for their health problems. From 1950s to the 1970s, active Barefoot Doctors numbered over 1 million.
- In the 1960s, the challenge of meeting the needs of rural and poor populations throughout the developing world became more apparent. During this period, the Barefoot Doctor approach served as inspiration for early CHW programs in many countries, including Honduras, India, Indonesia, Tanzania, and Venezuela. In the United States, the federal government began supporting CHW programs as vehicles for expanding access to health care for underserved communities. This contributed greatly to the development of community health centers.
- Community Health Worker programs gained even more momentum in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly across Latin America and Africa. For example, national CHW programs were launched by governments in Indonesia, India, Nepal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Honduras, and other Latin American countries. Smaller CHW programs were also established in many developed nations around the world with the support of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These initiatives played a significant role the promotion of literacy, family planning, immunizations, and other economic development activities. and privilege dynamics.
- In the late 1980s and 1990s, periods of economic and political instability contributed to the loss of many government-backed CHW initiatives. However, over the past 20 years, there has been a resurgence of highly successful programs around the world, supported by research findings that demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based programs in improving child health.
- By 2007, it was estimated that more than 120,000 community health workers were serving throughout the United States, and that total was expected to grow by 7% annually. In recent years, CHWs have been gaining national recognition for their ability to effectively address health and social issues within their communities. For example:
 - Fifteen states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws addressing Community Health Worker infrastructure, professional identity, workforce development, or financing.
 - Six states have created Community Health Worker Advisory Boards.
 - Eight states have established a Community Health Worker scope of practice.

Sources: The National Institute of Health, a Brief History of Community Health Worker Programs (Henry Perry, September 2013), Community Health Worker Network of NY, and MHP Salud.

A Closer Look at the Promotor Model

Many Community Health Worker programs focus on serving the needs of specific ethnic or racial groups. In Latino communities, community health workers are usually referred to as *Promotores*.

The Promotor Model is a grassroots approach to building community capacity that engages Promotores in strengthening their leadership skills as they connect people to needed information, services, and resources. Given the long history of Promotores, there are countless individuals, organizations, and communities across the world who helped shape this approach. However, the Promotor Model introduced to Best Start Communities is based on the collective work of the Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, Vision y Compromiso, Latino Health Access, and Planned Parenthood—all of which have trained and supported hundreds of *Promotores* in the Southern California region.

ENGAGING MARGINALIZED LATINO COMMUNITIES

In the United States, Latinos who are native or monolingual Spanish speakers are more likely than English speakers to experience difficulty when navigating social service systems—especially if they lack adequate translation support or bilingual staff. This is particularly true among recent immigrants and undocumented individuals who may be fearful of discrimination or agency policies that can lead to incarceration, family separation, and deportation.

For these reasons, Promotores are uniquely qualified to address the needs of underserved Latino communities because they reach community members where they are: they speak the same language, share a common culture, and go out into neighborhoods to connect with people where they live, eat, play, work, and worship.

By conducting culturally and linguistically competent outreach, Promotores build strong relationships in the communities they serve and play a pivotal role in connecting with hard to reach Latino populations. Many Latino immigrants also come from countries where Promotor programs have been well-established for decades, which also boosts receptivity to their community outreach efforts.

“In the field, Promotores can reach the Latino community in ways that traditional outreach strategies cannot. For example, many communities face language barriers or are intimidated by complex service systems. Many are monolingual Spanish-speakers and some may not be able to read or write. They may not be able to read a flier or feel comfortable calling an organization to ask for help...but a Promotor can come into the community to provide one-on-one support, talk to people in safe places, such as their own home, and allow people to take in information at a relaxed pace.”

–Lupe Gonzalez-Hernandez, PST Capacity Builder

HOW DOES THE MODEL HELP BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY?

Promotores often see themselves as the bridge between community and social service agencies. However, their role extends far beyond the disease-prevention functions of community health. As grassroots leaders, Promotores also seek to promote human rights and social justice by empowering residents to advocate on behalf of their families and neighbors.

Guided by a strong belief in the wealth of knowledge and leadership potential within their communities, Promotores provide opportunities for residents to learn about the issues that impact them and come together to advocate for their shared interests. For example, many Promotores programs have partnered with community members to address issues related to affordable housing, improving health services, equal education opportunities, neighborhood safety, access to healthy foods, and combatting discrimination. Through their training, Promotores also learn how to support others in establishing alliances with local stakeholders and civic officials to increase support for community change efforts.

In addition, the Promotor Model has helped service providers and community organizations expand their understanding of who has the potential to serve as an effective community leader. Agencies that have integrated the model into their practices have discovered that Promotores can play an important role in helping them to learn more about communities, improve service strategies, and reach hundreds, if not thousands, of people where traditional outreach has been largely ineffective.

The quality that makes Promotores uniquely effective is their ability to establish profound relationships based on mutual understanding, mutual respect, and empathy. By cultivating meaningful relationships, Promotores build community trust, the foundation for engagement in a process of community transformation.

Vision y Compromiso, The Promotor Model



How Are Promotores Trained?

It important to first acknowledge that many Promotores serve as effective community leaders without formal training. Additionally, people who do complete Promotor training often have a history of supporting and mobilizing people in their communities, as well as a genuine passion for service and the desire to tackle important social issues. What Promotor training does offer these ‘natural helpers’ is the opportunity to further explore and grow their innate and developed capacities further.

KEY PROMOTOR CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to the desire to help others and their communities, effective Promotores share several characteristics:

- Belonging to or deeply understanding the community (including the daily experiences and cultural norms of members).
- Communicating well with a diverse range of people, including the community, staff, community organizations, and partner agencies.
- The ability to build a positive, respectful rapport with community members.
- An outgoing personality.
- Empathy, including the ability to recognize and respond with care to the needs of others.
- Persistence, creativity, and resourcefulness.
- Natural leadership ability or the potential to develop strong leadership skills, including personal strength and courage.
- Flexibility.
- Being a positive role model for others.
- Reliable knowledge of community resources.

PROMOTORES TRAINING FOCUS AREAS

Training methods and content vary depending upon Promotor program goals (specifically, what you expect the Promotores to accomplish), the set of skills required to lead community engagement activities, and the experience level of participants. For example, a public health organization may train *Promotores* to conduct presentations to promote the prevention of diabetes, while a housing program may train *Promotores* on topics such tenant rights or advocacy to promote affordability.

On average, introductory Promotor trainings require approximately 40 hours of instruction that covers:

- Health promotion and disease prevention, which may include prevention and management strategies related to a specific disease.
- Social issues and policies that affect target communities, particularly the well-being of resident children and families.

- How to be an effective advocate in various settings (e.g. at the doctor’s office, in a social service agency, or at their child’s school).
- Skill building related to:
 - Public speaking
 - Communication (verbal and written)
 - Outreach
 - Action planning and documentation
 - Research and data collection
 - Evaluation

In addition to strengthening skills and knowledge tied to program objectives, Promotor trainings often incorporate time for personal sharing and reflection, team building activities, and interactive learning activities that help to create a balance between information sharing and hands-on practice. This also supports participants in feeling like their personal stories and experiences are valued, which is a part of recognizing everyone as an important contributor on the path of becoming an effective educator, advocate, and leader.

INTEGRATION OF POPULAR EDUCATION PRINCIPLES

Developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Friere, Popular Education is centered on the concept that everybody has valuable life experience and a knowledge base to draw from, regardless of formal education or training. It is often described as a people-oriented and people-guided approach to education that recognizes everyone as a teacher, learner, and leader.

In order to affirm the value of shared leadership, the dignity of all participants, and the assets of all community members, the following Popular Education principles have been integrated into Promotor training curricula:

- We are all teachers and we are all learners.
- Whether we are doctors, laborers, lawyers, or waitresses, we all know a lot based on our life experience. Therefore, as educators, we should always start with what people already know.
- The purpose of education is not to maintain the status quo, but rather to create a more just and equal society.
- We learn more when we feel comfortable and at ease with our fellow learners.
- We learn more when we are actively involved.
- We need opportunities to see and reflect on our own reality.
- We need opportunities to practice what we have learned.

PROMOTOR CERTIFICATION

Upon completion of Promotores training, several organizations issue a certificate of completion as a way of honoring participants' time and effort. Receiving certification that attests to their knowledge and skill, and also helps newly trained Promotores feel more confident and well prepared.

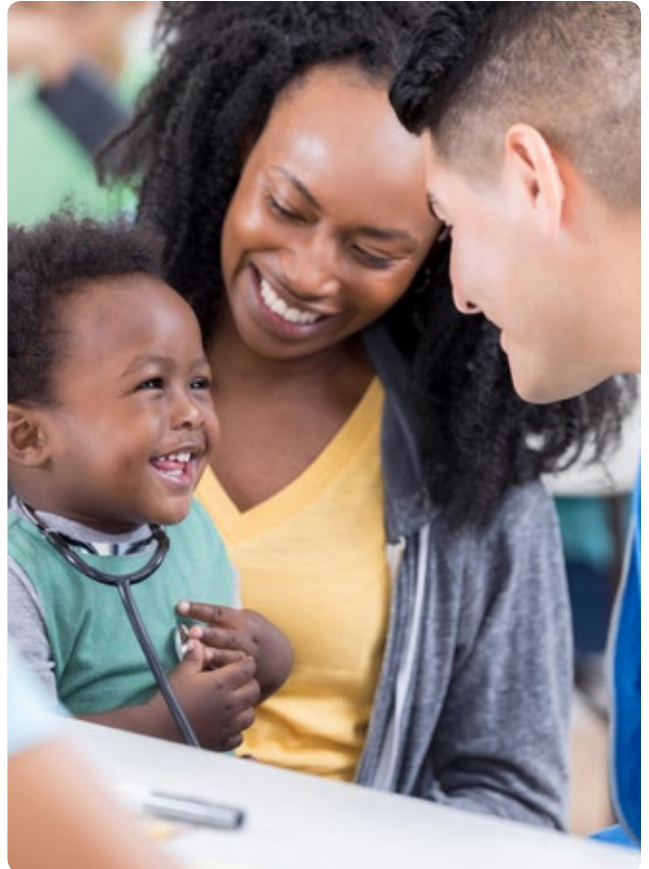
However, there is ongoing discussion about the pros and cons of organizations certifying Promotores because the role is carried out both formally and informally within communities. While there is much to be gained by advancing Promotor training in ways that create pathways for other leadership roles and employment opportunities, there is also the desire to avoid diminishing the contributions of natural helpers who actively advocate for others. Therefore, it is recommended that the pros and cons of certification be considered in partnership with community members as part of Promotor training planning discussions.

How Are Promotores Compensated?

Compensation for Promotores depends on their status:

- **Volunteer:** Volunteer Promotores are not paid for their work, but commit to serving their communities altruistically. In some cases, volunteers may receive an honorarium or stipend.
- **Contractor:** Contracted Promotores are not employees of sponsoring organizations, but are paid a set amount to complete an overall task, set goals, or services.
- **Employee:** Paid employee Promotores are considered part of the staff of the organization. Their work is directed by the organization and they can be asked to fulfill very specific tasks within specific timeframes. Employed Promotores may be part-time or full-time, be paid hourly or salaried, and may or may not receive benefits.

Each compensation model is based not only on the needs the community and sponsoring organizations, but also the resources available to support Promotores community engagement activities. (Source: *Promotores Program Implementation Guide, MHP Salud*)



Capacity Building in Action

Evolution of the Promotor Model and Alignment with Best Start Goals

Over the past 20 years, many of the Promotores programs based in Los Angeles County have evolved from focusing primarily on the prevention of health disease and increasing medical care access to a more holistic approach. This shift is the result of Promotores recognizing how a struggle to meet basic needs (rent, food, clothes, utilities) impacts a family’s physical, mental and emotional well-being, as well as their receptivity to helpful information. As a Promotora observed, *“If a family is struggling to pay the rent, the last thing on their mind is to listen to me talk to them about Cancer prevention”*.

Thus, the Promotor Model has expanded to encompass resident engagement and advocacy. Promotores have also integrated new skills sets into their training and work—including mental health, coaching, networking, and community activism.

In California, the recent growth and expansion of the Promotor Model has been largely fueled by the Network of Promotoras and Community Health Workers. Launched in 2001 by Vision y Compromiso, which provides leadership, dissemination of best practices, and statewide advocacy to advance the Promotor Model, the Network supports Promotores in exchanging information about outreach and service delivery strategies, local and statewide issues, lessons learned, and best practices.

The Promotor Model is a social change model that can be implemented with any issue (i.e. diabetes, neighborhood safety, breast cancer) because it is the quality of the relationships, not the particular issue that has the potential to create community change. Building community trust requires promotores to participate in community activities, visit people in their homes, and spend time sitting with people, listening to their experiences and sharing information. Over time, both promotores and the people they meet deepen their commitment to each other, but they also change their own behaviors and create change in their families too.

Vision y Compromiso



ALIGNMENT WITH BEST START GOALS

Best Start and The Promotor Model both serve as vehicles for community stakeholders—including parents, residents, organizations, and advocates—to mobilize for improved policies, services, and investments that “promote” the well-being of families. They are also guided by a commitment to value, engage, and partner with residents as wise, capable leaders of community change efforts.

Like Promotores, resident Best Start leaders:

- Are dedicated individuals who are motivated by a desire to be an active partner in positive community change.
- Have great love and respect for their communities, and work to ensure that they are healthy and thriving by improving access to quality services, critical information, and beneficial opportunities.
- See themselves as implementers of community change strategies who partner with others to achieve desired outcomes.
- Have diverse experiences and backgrounds.
- Organize trainings and place-based projects designed to build community capacity.
- Embrace ongoing learning and training.
- Demonstrate effective leadership and mutual support in a variety of ways.
- Believe in everyone’s right to be “part of the conversation” and exercise their leadership abilities.
- Live in or have strong ties to the communities where they serve.



LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Getting Started

When organizing Promotor/Community Health Worker trainings:

- Begin by reviewing what the goals and objectives are for your program. Ideally, these goals have been defined by the community. If not, build in time before the training to ask residents, stakeholders, and prospective Promotores/CHWs about the community's needs, resources, and interests.
- Then ask, "What skills do Promotores/CHWs need to accomplish stated goals?" More specifically: which groups, agencies, and institutions do they need to work with to accomplish these activities? What information do they need?
- In addition, ask the Promotores/CHWs what topics they are interested in covering (in addition to what is required by the program goals and objectives). The more input they have in shaping their program experience, the more receptive they will be to learning new information and ideas.

Adapted from MHP Salud Promotores Implementation Guide

INTRODUCING THE PROMOTOR MODEL: ENGAGING BEST START WILMINGTON

As part of their ongoing learning agenda, Best Start Wilmington (BSW) leaders participated in various *Promotor*-led events from 2017 to 2018, including the annual Vision y Compromiso Statewide Conference. Through these meetings, they were able to learn more about Promotor activities and their impact directly from experienced Promotores.

The more that BSW members learned about successful Promotores-led community engagement across the region, particularly among Latinos, the stronger the interest in Promotor training became. Their vision was to help create safe, informed, and united community. Together, they decided that the Promotor Model reflected this aim. Additionally, the concept of serving from the heart (with empathy and compassion) resonated with many resident leaders, and the support for Promotores who decided to pursue training or employment opportunities was appealing.

"I want to become a Best Start Promotora!"
–Best Start Community Member

As a result, several BSW leaders expressed interest in becoming certified *Promotores* so that they could engage, support, and collaborate with their fellow community members more effectively. Although some Partnership members were already acting as informal *Promotores* in various ways, the general consensus was that formal training was needed to learn more about the theory behind the Promotor model, strengthen their outreach skills, and earn a certificate that would provide confirmation of their skills as they pursue other leadership roles or paid employment. For BSW members, a certificate also symbolized recognition and validation of the many hours they were dedicating to Best Start.

INITIAL PREPARATION FOR PROMOTOR TRAINING

Once Best Start Wilmington members expressed interest in organizing *Promotores* training, completing the following action steps helped them clarify learning objectives, identify desired benefits, and select an appropriate trainer:

1. **Conduct brainstorming sessions.** Members created a list of their needs and wants based on BSW goals. This resulted in a proposal for formal Promotor training.
2. **Discuss the Pros and Cons of formal Promotor training.** Pros and Cons are weighed during a group conversation to determine whether to proceed.

Pros:

- Increase knowledge of the proven-effective Promotor model.
- Opportunity to connect to bigger network.
- Wider scope of training and capacity building opportunities.
- Strengthened sense of identity.
- Employment opportunities within local networks.

Cons:

- Training would be offered to a limited number of participants.
- Not all members understood the benefit of becoming a Promotor.
- The time commitment is significant and would be a barrier for some to participate.
- Not all members felt the need for training.

3. **Research and identify potential Promotor trainers.** BSW members gathered information about training resources by speaking to *Promotores* about where they trained and asking local organizations about for referrals.
4. **Request proposals that include training topics and objectives for review.** Select members called and asked for background information regarding curricula content. They were then able to review sample content and activities along with other proposed training components.
5. **Share recommendations based on the review of training curricula with BSW members.** Members then discussed which of the trainings would be the best fit based on stated goals, proposed content, and session formats.

6. **Agree on Final Decision-Making Process.** After providing an opportunity for everyone to weigh in regarding their recommendations and preferences, BSW members agreed to support a majority vote, trusting that the best interest of the group would be honored by the final decision.
7. **Selection of trainer and training content** based on a majority group vote.
8. **Engagement of trainers in co-design process.** BSW members provided input to the selected training organization to ensure that the sessions would be customized to fit the needs of the group. This included phone calls between the trainers and members to establish shared understanding of BSW's successes, struggles, and desired outcomes.
9. **Coordination of training logistics.** Related actions carried out by BSW members included:
 - Setting a budget and finalizing options for food, transportation, and materials.
 - Choosing a pick-up and drop-off location for participant transport.
 - Conducting outreach to recruit participants.
 - Developing messaging to communicate about the training.
 - Creating a timeline for outreach, recruitment, selection, and training dates.
 - Devising a fair participant selection process to include members from the different groups associated with Best Start Wilmington, including: Leadership Group, Partnership members, and graduates from the Building Stronger Families cohorts.

OVERVIEW OF BSW PROMOTOR TRAINING

Best Start Wilmington selected Vision y Compromiso (VyC), an organization that leads the statewide Promotores and Community Health Worker Network and has trained more than 1,000 Promotores across California and Mexico. Because VyC organizes an annual Promotores conference attended by several Best Start Communities, Wilmington leaders felt confident about the organization's ability to conduct effective trainings in Spanish. They also wanted to explore ways that VyC and members of the statewide Promotora network it coordinates could help support ongoing BSW efforts.

Following co-design discussions with VyC, BSW members agreed that the *Latin@ Saludable es Familia Saludable/Latina Health is Family Health* training curriculum was the best fit for their group. *Latin@ Saludable es Familia Saludable/Latina Health is Family Health* is a 40-hour core Promotor training that is delivered in Spanish. The curriculum uses issues such as diabetes, healthy nutrition, and physical activity as an educational framework to increase awareness about a community health issues and resident engagement opportunities. Training activities are also designed to strengthen communication skills, increase knowledge of community resources, and introduce popular education strategies to support Promotores' work in communities. In addition, the training provides a structure for building community by emphasizing the sharing and interaction among participants through activities based on Popular Education methods.

Is Promotor/Community Health Worker Training a Good Fit for Your Organization?

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Do you have a strong understanding of the Promotor/Community Health Worker (CHW) Model, including its purpose, history, benefits, and related challenges?
- How will Promotor/CHW training benefit your work or support your achievement of defined goals?
- Have community members requested or expressed interest in Promotor/CHW training?
- What roles and responsibilities would Promotores/CHWs fulfill?
- Will Promotores/CHWs be compensated? If yes, how?
- What are the demographics of the community? To what extent will the model need to be adapted based on demographics?
- Do you have access to experienced trainers and an adequate budget to cover associated costs (training fees, materials, logistical support including food, child care, meeting space, transportation, and interpretation—if needed)?
- Are there existing community-based efforts that can serve as potential partners if the community adopts the Promotor model?
- Will there be criteria and requirements for potential applicants?
- Will continuing support and additional skill building be available for newly trained Promotores/CHWs? How will sponsoring organizations remain engaged?
- What connections would you like to make to broader Promoter/CHW efforts?
- Are there be opportunities for employment for Promotores/CHWs after the training?
- Are there opportunities for the Promotores/CHWs to take on leadership roles within their community?
- If community members are asked to sit at the table, how will their voice be included in the decision-making process?
- Is there sufficient understanding of the potential benefits and challenges to implementing the Promotor/CHW model?

Source: Lupe Gonzalez-Hernandez, Partnership Support Team

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL PROMOTOR TRAININGS

Outlined below are recommended strategies for supporting community members in getting the most out of Promotores training:

Strategy #1: Share and explore background information regarding the Promotor/Community Health Worker Model, including its history, evolution, and impact.

Recommended Actions

- Provide opportunities for community members to learn about the origins and development of the Promotores/Community Health Workers model. Include references to local initiatives where applicable.

- *Learning about the Community Health Worker programs helps participants feel connected to a rich global history of community change work. It also helps them place their own contributions in the context of a growing Promotor movement.*
- Gauge the group’s interest in the Promotor model, and discuss the potential benefits related to incorporating its practices into existing work.
 - *Sharing examples of Promotor program goals and activities can help resident leaders gain a more concrete sense of how to advance the community’s goals. Asking active Promotores to speak about their experiences can also help community members set realistic training goals and better understand what successful community engagement requires. Hearing from active Promotores can also help prospective Promotores recognize that they may already be acting in this role, which boosts self-confidence.*
- Uplift the importance of knowing and sharing our own stories
 - *A core element of the Promotor Model is the use of one’s own life experience and knowledge to educate and help others. It is therefore important to provide opportunities for prospective Promotores trainees to experience the power of sharing their stories with others.*

“Promotores can learn a lot about the importance of advocacy or how to do outreach...but if there is nowhere to apply these skills, the benefit of their newly acquired knowledge will be limited. So it is important to remember that Promotores thrive most when they can put their training into action.”
–Best Start Community Member

Suggested Tools and References

- *A Brief History of Community Health Workers Program.* This paper summarizes the long history of the Community Health Worker program, including how it has been adapted for diverse populations around the world. (https://www.mchip.net/sites/default/files/mchipfiles/02_CHW_History.pdf)
- *The Promotor Model for Building Healthy Communities.* In 2011, VyC, Latino Health Access, and Esperanza Community Housing engaged 125 Promotores in facilitated conversations about the Promotor Model. Published by The California Endowment, this paper highlights the role of Promotores in communities and agencies, and the capacity of the Promotor Model to transform communities. (http://www.visionycompromiso.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/TCE_Promotores-Framing-Paper.pdf)

See Appendix A for a sample practice exercise.

Strategy #2: Provide opportunities for post-training reflection to support effective integration of the Promotor Model.

Recommended Actions

Organize a debrief session for training participants to consider the following critical questions before they move into applying what they learned:

- What did we learn about the *Promotor Model*?
- What different will our learning make in our lives and in our work?
- What do we want to share with others?
- What other information do we need in order to fully understand the model and plan next steps?
- How can we promote integrity and encourage inclusion in our work as Promotores?
- In what ways does the model need to be adapted for our work and community?
- What will be our measures and standards as we continue to develop our skills as effective advocates for community transformation?
- How do we open or create opportunities for new and upcoming leadership?



Strategy #3: Be proactive when identifying opportunities for the members to practice and strengthen Promotores skills as part of their ongoing work in communities.

Recommended Actions

- Organize discussions with newly trained Promotores to seek their input about practice opportunities.
- How they would like to utilize their leadership skills within or outside their community group/organization? (Include both short- and long-term goals)
 - In what ways do they want to advocate for their community?

Examples include:

- ✓ Improving access to needed services by becoming a direct link to social service agencies.
- ✓ Helping people understand the various systems shaping their lives, such as housing, immigration, health, safety and education
- ✓ Participate in community mobilizing efforts.
- As part of group planning and implementation activities, engage trained Promotores in leading or assisting with:
 - Goal setting and strategy development

- Meeting coordination and facilitation
- Coaching and mentoring peers
- Developing and leading presentations or discussions that incorporate popular education techniques
- Group conflict management
- Conducting community outreach
- Identifying ways to cultivate leadership from within their communities
- Explore ways to connect trained Promotores with partner organizations that might benefit from their specialized skill sets.
- Identify supplemental training resources that will help Promotores continue to strengthen their leadership skills.
 - What supports and resources would be most beneficial to their continued learning and growth?
 - Are Promotores interested in connecting with experienced coaches and mentors?
- Create a method to track the growth and contributions of Promotores as leaders. For example, a visual timeline or a storyboard of their work could be developed and shared with their peers and the community stakeholders.
- Celebrate progress and successes as a group.
- Take time to reflect on experiences and look for lessons learned
 - As newly trained Promotores take on more leadership responsibilities, look for ways to uplift the importance of self-care and setting reasonable goals.



Strategy #4: Connect Best Start community members to existing Promotores programs and networks to support ongoing learning.

Goal

To create opportunities for Promotores to connect with others who understand and support their work, including experienced advocates who can serve as mentors/coaches. Seeing other Promotores in action and hearing them share lessons learned also helps those who are newer to the Model connect Promotor theory with practice, which boosts confidence in its benefits; tap into new inspiration and motivation; and recognize that there are countless ways to contribute as a Promotor.

For example, The Network of Promotoras and Community Health Workers led by Vision y Compromiso represents over 4,000 members. It accomplishes its work by “bringing together Promotores, allied agencies, and local leaders, who are integrating the Promotor Model to better serve their communities, region by region. In each Network region, leadership committees represent the region and they meet monthly to identify local needs of residents and promotores. These Regional Networks (or Regional Comitês) develop, implement, and evaluate an annual work plan to support their work.”



In addition, a National Network of Promotoras and Community Health Workers was created in 2014 as a vehicle for delivering training and disseminating best practices to support promotores and CHWs and provide technical assistance to help institutions and potential employers understand the Promotor Model and the communities they represent. The National Network is currently active in California, Arizona, Nevada, Washington, and Colorado, and is expanding to include Oregon, Hawaii, Arkansas, and Washington, D.C. It convenes twice yearly at VyC's annual Promotoras and Community Health Workers conference.

Recommended Actions

- Research organizations that use the *Promotor Model* to identify potential mentors and opportunities to participate in their community engagement efforts.
- If based in California, contact the Promotoras and Community Health Workers Network to obtain information about program resources and scheduled events.
- Organize or take part in conversations where Promotor (a) best practices, lessons learned, and networking suggestions are shared.

Suggested Promotor Events and Resources in Los Angeles County

- **The Vision y Compromiso Annual Conference.** Held once a year, usually the first week of October. (<http://visionycompromiso.org/>)
- **Vision y Compromiso's Los Angeles Committee's Quarterly Forums.** Contact their Los Angeles County Promotoras Network Manager and the Los Angeles Regional Coordinator for more information. (<http://visionycompromiso.org/>)
- **The USC Community Safety Conference.** Usually held in March or April. (<https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/news/usc-community-safety-conference-lifting-the-voices-of-southern-california-residents-to>)
- **COFEM (Council of Mexican Federations).** (<https://www.cofem.org/>)
- **Community Health Promoters Training Program.** A six-month training program offered by Esperanza Community Housing Corporation that provides a comprehensive training on health and social issues. (www.Esperanzacommunityhousing.org)



BSW COMMUNITY GOALS AND OUTCOMES

This section summarizes Promotor training goals as defined by Best Start Wilmington members in collaboration with their Best Start Capacity Builder, as well as initial outcomes.

Goal

To introduce the Best Start Wilmington Community to Promotor models and trainings that reflect their leadership philosophy and can help them enhance their ability to serve as effective, trusted leaders.

Outcome

BSW members:

- Participated in Promotores-sponsored conferences and activities, which ultimately led to their decision to organize a Best Start Promotor training.
- Identified, researched, and presented Promotor models to the Community Partnership in order to gain consensus on which training would be best.
- Completed a 40-hour Promotor training that concluded with participants conducting a final presentation based on their community interests.



Goal

To elevate the value of members’ lived experience and identify ways it can be used to support mutual learning and effective community action.

Outcome

BSW Members embraced the Promotor Model as a vehicle for continuing to nurture community leadership, vowed to learn from both successes and challenges that the members faced, and acknowledged in meetings that everyone holds valuable wisdom. They also identified priorities for ongoing learning and capacity building to support their Best Start Promotores efforts.



Goal

To encourage organizations to recognize the ways in which community members can strengthen their own efforts to serve the community.

Outcome

Conversations between partner organization and BSW community members regarding collaboration with Promotores are in early stages, but agency partners have expressed genuine interest in exploring ways to incorporate more defined community leadership roles as part of their services and programs. Limitations in budget, meeting space, and staff were also cited as barriers to Promotor engagement, but the desire to find ways to overcome these obstacles is strong. Promotor network connections can also provide helpful examples of innovative, affordable programming options.



Major Reflections and Key Lessons Learned

What Is Important to Keep in Mind When Exploring Promotor Training?

- Promotores often view community advocacy and service as a way of life. For most, it is not just a job, but a way to express and honor their heartfelt commitment to promoting the well-being of others. Thus, empathy, compassion, and love for their community is their essence and guiding motivation.
- Promotores can help alleviate short-term challenges, but are always looking for ways to develop long-term solutions for the contributing community factors.
- Promotores have a long history but are new to many organizations, which can give rise to misconceptions of what their role is or could be. Therefore, reviewing various Promotor job descriptions or talking with other organizations who have hired Promotores to take on roles is both helpful and recommended.
- The role of the Promotores is not only to engage community for the sake of increasing participation in programs or initiatives, but also to elevate community wisdom and leadership capacities. Promotores use their knowledge and life experience to develop creative solutions for common challenges, and supporting their fellow residents in doing the same.
- It is important to uplift the important contributions made by community members who are “natural helpers” but may not have received formal Promotor training. These community members have a strong desire to serve their community, and have demonstrated leadership ability and resourcefulness. However, the Promotor training and networking opportunities described in this document can help them become even more effective leaders.
- Offering training related to performing administrative duties such as note taking, reporting, sending a fax or email, or using mobile technology is an important part of preparing Promotores to succeed, particularly if they are new to project planning and management. As an added plus, these skills are also transferable to other employment opportunities.



- Many Promotores have experienced some form of trauma, such as family hardships, violence, or immigration challenges that have impacted their emotional well-being. Because community outreach work can be difficult and emotionally draining, identifying options for Promotores to connect with self-care supports and mental health resources is an essential aspect of this work.
- Promotores come from diverse educational backgrounds. Some have formal education and others rely on their lived experience. For example, a Promotor may have had a profession, such as a teacher, doctor, nurse, etc., in their home country but were not able to continue in their profession in the United States due to personal circumstances or certification requirements. Because levels of exposure to training content may vary greatly, creating opportunities for everyone—regardless of their background—to share their wisdom and gifts is critical to establishing an equitable learning space. Assessing educational levels as part of a Promotor application process can also help facilitators plan appropriate ways to promote team building and validate participant experiences.
- Opportunity for employment is always a high priority for the *Promotores*. Although the work of *Promotores* has been integrated into many community mobilization efforts, not all organizations have the flexibility or infrastructure to support the establishment of paid Promotor positions. However, all options to provide adequate compensation or volunteer stipends should be explored.
- Community members often confide in Promotores. As relationships between Promotores and fellow resident deepen, ongoing supervision and peer support can be used to promote healthy boundary setting. Promotores have described how easy it is to feel like they are letting someone down if they are not able to respond quickly or address his or her needs. So it is very important that they feel encouraged and supported when establishing and maintaining clear expectations regarding their role, availability, etc.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THE PROMOTOR MODEL TRAINING

- Uplift the connections between current community goals and the Promotor model, while also emphasizing the opportunity to contribute to the rich history of Promotores.
- Before pursuing Promotor Training, engage group members in examining their capacity to take on all that the role requires. Be clear that Promotor training is a first step. As community leaders, Promotores are dedicated to ongoing learning.
- Assist potential training participants in honestly assessing how their leadership philosophies and styles align with the Promotor model, while emphasizing that each style has its benefits. This includes reviewing key Promotor competencies and responsibilities to help others gauge their interest and readiness. Also, be sure to communicate that it is perfectly acceptable for individual group members to decide to opt out of training opportunities because the model is not the best fit for them.

- Organize panel discussions led by experienced *Promotores* and their partner organizations who can share best practices and helpful lessons learned. These discussions will help provide community members with a clearer understanding of what Promotors have accomplished, potential implementation challenges, and the keys to success.
- Look for existing opportunities to support grassroots community efforts that align with Promotor goals and advocacy priorities. The more opportunities for Promotores to apply their skills, the better.
- Stay abreast of changes in law or the political climate that affect the role of *Promotores*, such as immigration reform, DACA, and the Affordable Care Act.
- Connect potential partner organizations with organizations that are experienced implementers of the Promotor Model to learn how to successfully integrate Promotores into their program structure and create opportunities for paid employment. This includes exploring what it means to create an appropriate balance between a Promotor's role and work incentives.

HERstory...One Community Member's Promotora Journey

Maria (not her real name), a dedicated young mother living in Los Angeles, first heard about Promotores training through the ESL class she was taking at her local elementary school. She was encouraged to apply to the training, but felt intimidated, and thought of many reasons why she shouldn't. However, with support from her peers and school personnel, she submitted her application. After completing the interview process, she was selected to part of the community organization's first Promotores cohort. Her training consisted of health education, social issues, and leadership skill building. At graduation, she was honored along with her fellow Promotores with a beautiful ceremony.

Afterwards, she applied for an internship opportunity with an ally organization and became part of a team of Promotores who provided information to households in the South Los Angeles area. This project later won high praise for its methodology and results, providing a launching pad for Maria. She was subsequently hired by another organization that promotes the well-being of South LA families, where she has worked for the past twenty years. To this day, she encourages other aspiring Promotores by sharing her story, vividly demonstrating how her Promotor skills not only opened doors of opportunity, but also enriched her life.

Lupe Gonzalez-Hernandez, PST Capacity Builder

Recommended Resources

Organizations

California Association of Community Health Workers

Esperanza Community Housing: Community Health Promoters Training Program

Latino Health Access

MHP Salud

National Association of Community Health Workers

The National Promotoras/Community Health Workers Network

The Promotoras/Community Health Workers Network (California)

US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Promotoras de Salud Initiative

Vision y Compromiso

Reference Materials

Community Health Workers Toolkit: Rural Health Information (RHI) Hub

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/community-health-workers>

Community Health Worker Evaluation Toolkit: Arizona Prevention Research Center

<https://azprc.arizona.edu/projects/capacity-building-training>

Promotor(a) Program Implementation Guide: MHP Salud

<http://mhpsalud.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Promotora-de-Salud-Implementation-Guide-Updated-07-24-2015.pdf>

Evaluation Toolkit for Promotor(a) de Salud Programs: MHP Salud

<https://mhpsalud.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Evaluation-Toolkit-for-Promotora-Programs.pdf>



APPENDIX A: SAMPLE PRACTICE EXERCISE

STORI: Story Telling for Observational, Reflective, Insightful Leadership
(Public Health Institute and Women’s Health Leadership)

The purpose of this exercise is to guide prospective and active Promotores in reflecting on who they are as leaders and what inspires them to serve the community.

Objectives of the exercise:

- Reflect on personal attributes and share your leadership passion.
- Learn about the attributes and passions of others in the group.
- Begin to understand the personal values and experiences that motivate members to participate.

Materials:

- A talking stick or other object that signifies the right to speak
- Flip chart with the following diagram
- Flip chart and markers to scribe

Some principles of participation:

- Be willing to share your story freely
- Honor the space and time for each participant.
- Listen to others’ stories without judgment or interrupting.
- Reflect on the stories and ensure that the scribe jots down key points
- Agree on a signal for when it is time to move to the next person (i.e., a hand gesture from the facilitator, a bell chime to mark that the time is coming to an end or an alarm).
- Encourage members to share on all four areas but do not force them to do so.

Time: Ideally, each person should be allotted 3-4 minutes to share.



Process:

1. Set up the room with seating in a circle shape.
2. After everyone is seated, ask each participant to respond to the following reflection questions:

Who am I?

- Please share your name. Is there a specific meaning to it?
- Who is in your family?
- What favorite thing do you like to do or what is one thing that makes you happy?

What gifts do I bring?

- Which of your qualities and talents do you consider to be important?
- Do others recognize them?
- In what ways do you share your gifts?

What motivates me?

- Why do you participate in community groups?
- What is a vision you would like to see become reality?
- What keeps you going as a leader?

What challenges do I face?

- Is something you would like to learn more about? Why?
- Is there something that makes you uncomfortable or you would like to overcome? Is there something new you would like to learn? If so, why?

3. When the group is ready to begin, the facilitator can start the circle by asking someone to volunteer to go first.
4. Hand the talking stick to members and invite each participant to share his or her story. (Facilitator can record key points on a flip chart paper).
5. After each person finishes sharing, thank him or her. Then the talking stick is passed to the next participant.
6. After everyone has shared, the facilitator thanks everyone and acknowledges the wealth of knowledge relayed.
7. The facilitator can take a couple of minutes to review some of the main points that emerged from the stories.