



Community's Lay Health Ambassadors

Moving to a new community is challenging with many things to learn and questions to be answered. Where do I live or get my mail, buy groceries, or find a doctor? There is a lot to do and so much to learn. Now, just imagine the added stress of living in an entirely new country. There would be unfamiliar customs or cultures, different foods and even ways to dress. Now imagine if you didn't even speak the local language.

Since 2020, Women Empowering Women has been working on one aspect of this dilemma – accessing health care for women and their families with language or cultural barriers. This began with a series of Health Fairs and Women's Health Circles. Concurrently Southwestern District Health Unit was given grant to hire a bilingual employee to increase their effectiveness reaching the ever growing Hispanic community. Beginning in 2023, a total of five Lay Health Ambassadors are in the community, each empowered to respond to individual needs in Dickinson and the surrounding communities. These Lay Health Ambassadors can provide translation plus make appointments and will even accompany women to appointments. They can help fill out forms, make connections and share health information and resources that may be helpful.

By working together and identifying partner groups and agencies, our community is able to help new residents of several different countries to settle here as they fill much needed jobs and expand our cultural diversity. Women Empowering Women worked in partnership with the Health Equity Division of the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services to fund three Ambassadors in this effort. Alondra and Monica will support the Hispanic community, whereas Jana will work with new Americans from Africa. Collaboration with Southwestern District Health Unit expands outreach through their Hispanic liaison hired to serve southwestern North Dakota counties. The Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce added staff to help settle Ukrainian refugee workers. Nicole and Iuliia have also been provided with information and resources to also act in the capacity of a Lay Health Ambassador. All Ambassadors received training on local resources and received healthcare information on a variety of topics as well as program applications such as Women's Way and the ND Colorectal Cancer project.

Women Empowering Women will be launching a guidebook for working with culturally diverse populations in March. To access the guidebook and learn more about the project or to reach a Lay Health Ambassador, go to www.wewnetwork.org.