

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY FORUM

Women's Wellness Guide

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Women often carry the responsibility of handling multiple roles and tasks, often putting aside their own health concerns as they prioritize the needs of their family members. It is not unusual for women to delay routine examinations, screenings, and subsequent treatment as they negotiate time and access to services. Leslie Stiles, Executive Director of the PA Commission for Women (PCW), would like to see this change.

Ms. Stiles, a long time advocate for disenfranchised women, discussed the mission and goals of the Pennsylvania Commission for Women (PCW). PCW emphasizes the identification and advancement of Pennsylvania women and girls; and the importance of providing opportunities to empower women and girls to reach their highest potential.¹ The Women's Wellness Guide is one initiative of many programs developed by PCW. It is aimed at reaching women, to educate and engage them, and encourage them to take control of their health.

The Women's Wellness Guide is actually an interactive self-service, touch-activated kiosk designed to offer women basic information on a range of topics such as: heart disease and stroke; cancer; osteoporosis; asthma; depression; diabetes; and weight management. Content is derived from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and the PA Department of Health and is reviewed by panel of medical experts. The content and literacy level is designed at the 5th grade reading level. Additionally, bilingual (English-Spanish) content is available and plans are underway to reach other limited English proficient (LEP) women with other commonly used languages in PA. The kiosk has an optional audio component.

One of the greatest advantages of the Women's Wellness Guide is that it can be placed in a variety of settings, providing access to otherwise hard-to-reach audiences. For example, a bilingual kiosk has been placed in the waiting room of the Allegheny County jail. Other venues will include WIC offices, public welfare agencies, and supermarket chains.

PWC is very interested in efficacy and outcomes. Collaborating with the vendor, St. Andrews Development Inc., Highmark will compile data to determine the impact of the guide. In its early stage of analysis it will be difficult to determine an effect on behavior change or health, but it may be possible to capture intentions to change. Ms. Stiles is very hopeful that the Women's Wellness Guide will become a model program, and one that is unprecedented in PA.

References

1. Pennsylvania Commission for Women. Mission statement. <http://www.pcw.state.pa.us/pcw/cwp/view.asp?a=460&q=150587&pcwNav=|>. Accessed November 11, 2008.