

Presentation Handout

Presentation Title: Fire Safety Solutions for Oklahomans with Disabilities 2011

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Program/Project Overview:

The Fire Safety Solutions for Oklahomans with Disabilities 2011 received funding to install 250 specialized smoke alarms and alert equipment as well as develop and disseminate accessible home fire and life safety messages for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing that live in the two metro areas of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. One of the key components of this project's success is the committed partnership between the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation, a non-profit disability organization, and two Oklahoma State (OSU) University entities – Oklahoma ABLE Tech (Oklahoma's Assistive Technology Act Program) and Fire Protection Publications. The individual and shared expertise of these partners uniquely positions the project to address and service the target population's specific needs related to both disability and fire safety. Additionally, the previously successful smoke alarm installation programs at OSU, *Fire Safety Solutions for People with Disabilities* and *SAFE Oklahoma*, provides much in the way of both experience and lessons learned to this project. A follow up survey is distributed to all consumers who participate three to six months after the smoke alarm installation. This evaluation tool gathers information to assess the consumer satisfaction with the program equipment and materials. This survey also collects information about smoke alarm activations and home fire safety behavior practices. A report documenting the project will be prepared so other states may benefit from the lessons learned using the Fire Safety Solutions for Oklahomans with Disabilities 2011.

Formative Evaluation Planning:

The USFA annually reports that the fire death rate in Oklahoma is more than double the national fire death rate per million population. At the time of this grant application, Oklahoma ranked 5th highest in the US and is currently 2nd, only behind the District of Columbia.

The current population in Oklahoma is 3.6 million with half of the state's population living in the two metro areas of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. With 15.8% of the population reporting at least one disability; it is estimated that 285,190 Oklahomans living in the metro areas have a disability. Half of those, or 142,600 are deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, *Fire in the United States*, Aug. '07 reported those with limited physical/cognitive abilities are at a higher risk of death and injury from fire as well as those who live at or below the poverty level. Oklahoma ranks 9th highest in the US living below the poverty level. These data, along with 6 years of smoke alarm project experience is the basis of the risk assessment for the project design.

Process Evaluation - Implementation:

Fire Safety Solutions for Oklahomans with Disabilities 2011 targets Oklahomans who are deaf and hard of hearing in the sixteen counties that comprise the two metro areas of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. The project is marketed to the target population through fully accessible formats at a variety of disability-related venues. The goal is to install specialized smoke alarms and alert equipment that meet the needs of the people who are deaf and hard of hearing in the targeted areas and deliver customized and fully accessible home fire safety education to all who participate. The smoke alarms, alert equipment and installation process are based on wakefulness studies and the National Fire Alarm Code, 2010 Edition. Trained installers install the smoke alarms and provide a personalized family fire drill and review of the home fire and life safety messages.

A follow up survey is distributed to all consumers who participate three to six months after the smoke alarm installation in order to gather consumer information to assess satisfaction regarding project equipment and materials as well as to collect information about smoke alarm activations and home fire safety behavior practices.

Impact Evaluation – Short Term Results:

To date, 198 applications have been approved with 115 homes receiving completed installations for an impact of 345 people including family members. This equates to 365 First Alert smoke alarms being installed, 120 Lifetone alert devices and 27 Gentex alarms. Current numbers show that at least 30% of homes do not meet minimum code requirements for coverage and have existing alarms newer than 10 years. And at least 23% of homes have NO smoke alarms at all. No 'saves' have been reported to date; however, the former *Fire Safety Solutions for Oklahomans with Disabilities* project funded through USFA/FEMA, Assistance to Firefighters, Fire Prevention and Safety Grants awarded to Fire Protection Publications, Oklahoma State University, there have been nine life saves documented over the past six years as a direct result of the grant project; therefore, it is fully expected that life saves will occur as the result of this grant funded project as well.

Outcome Evaluation – Long Term Results:

The lesson in this project for the Vision 20/20 Symposium is the risk assessment and the use of committed partners that are uniquely positioned to implement best practices with an at risk population. The partners are working to build capacity with local fire departments and to help them recognize the unique communication needs of this target population. Data and lessons learned continue to be collected.

Recommendations for Others:

Select committed partners; find appropriate state specific data appropriately identifying at-risk populations; network with key stakeholders to successfully advance the goals and objectives of the project; use people first language, stay current with codes, research and best practices.

Conclusions:

Fire Safety Solutions for Oklahomans with Disabilities 2011 has had tremendous success, although many more Oklahomans who are deaf and hard of hearing are in need of specialized smoke alarms. Great potential exists for sharing this model project with other states in order that the targeted population may benefit from the success and lessons learned in Oklahoma.