

Interim Report on
Latinx Outreach Worker/Organizer at Waltham Council on Aging
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Submitted to JF&CS, Mt. Auburn Hospital, & Waltham CoA
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Summary

This report details the activities and accomplishments of a Latina outreach worker/community organizer based at the Waltham Council on Aging (CoA) from November 2019 to March 2020, when the CoA closed due to the Corona virus. The position was designed as a demonstration of how to better include Spanish-speaking seniors in Waltham, particularly at and through the CoA. The worker is paid through Waltham Connections grants from Jewish Family and Children's Services (JF&CS) and Mt. Auburn Hospital.

Two things stand out in this report. First, it shows that is a lot that can be done to better include Latinx seniors. One avenue is collaborating with agencies in information and referrals. Another is helping individual seniors. And a third is setting up new programs and making current programs more accessible to Latinx seniors. The second thing that stands out is that we hired an outstanding person for this job. In less than four months she set many things in motion along all of the avenues above.

This summary is short and the report is long. Going through the documents and notes on interviews with the worker, it became clear that we should not lose what has been learned in this short time. The report gets long because it includes extensive excerpts from the worker's records and the interview notes. The detail will hopefully prove valuable when things get put back together.

The origins and description of the position

The need for a Latinx outreach worker/community organizer ("the worker") at the CoA was highlighted in a 2017 focus group of 23 Latinx seniors conducted by Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging. Only 3 of the 23 participants had been to the Senior Center. The discussion showed that for many older Latinos, services to older adults are "hidden," in the sense that they have a vague idea of services but do not know what they are, for whom they are intended, or how to access them. One participant summed it up: "The Americans, they have these centers where they receive support. They have services that help the elderly to fill the taxes. We have nothing in Spanish.... I do not know anything that currently exists, only the 'Aging Council,' but the problems are, one, it's not in Spanish."

The first actions that Connections took to better serve Latinx seniors were several multi-lingual social events at the Waltham Senior Center in 2017 and 2018, as well as the translation of the monthly CoA newsletter into Spanish (and Haitian Creole), which started in late 2018. The event highlight was a Fiesta with Latin music and food attended by about 50 Latinx seniors. The events yielded 6 to 8 new Latinx volunteers for Connections as well as a handful of new Latinx participants in CoA activities (e.g., trips and exercise classes). The Spanish newsletters (as well as Haitian Creole versions) are distributed by Connections volunteers and CoA staff to churches, agencies, businesses, and senior housing sites around the city. They have spurred a few calls and visits to the CoA for help, but the lack of Spanish speaking staff hampered the CoA's ability to respond.

Recognizing the continuing shortcomings in serving Latinx seniors, the CoA and Waltham Connections decided to seek funds to hire a part-time Latinx outreach worker/organizer to demonstrate how to better reach and serve Latinx seniors in Waltham. In the Fall of 2019 Connections obtained a \$5,000 grant from Jewish Family and Children's Services (JF&CS) and \$1,000 from Mt. Auburn Hospital to do so.

The job description for an outreach worker/community organizer was developed and circulated in the community (see Attachment A). The position is part time (initially 6 hours a week, increased to 8 hours in February) and the purpose is to improve and expand the participation of Waltham's Latinx seniors in CoA services and activities and to also better connect these seniors with other community services. After a community-wide search, the new Latinx worker began in mid-November. She is a bi-lingual Latina, long-time resident of Waltham, mother of three young children, and holder of a Masters degree in International Health Policy and Management from Brandeis's Heller School. While based at the CoA the worker is formally an employee of Healthy Waltham, which manages the two grants.

In the first month on the job the worker participated in orientation sessions with CoA staff regarding outreach, income evaluation, and procedures. She also met with Connections leaders and Latinx volunteers. The orientation included discussions of an evaluation of the position and how to collect and share needed information.

Methods for the Report

The data for this report were gathered primarily from detailed time sheets maintained by the worker, as well as monthly interviews with her and the CoA Director, Marybeth Duffy. The daily time sheets contain notes on what she did and how long was spent on activities. The types of activities tracked include contacts with community agencies, individual help provided, holding group discussions, and developing new/improved services.

The original evaluation plan also called for tracking indicators of success in engaging Latinx seniors, including attendance of Latinos at activities (e.g., health

screening, fitness classes, trips) and numbers receiving services, (e.g, meals on wheels, fuel assistance, transportation.) However, when the Senior Center closed in mid March, these activities and services were suspended and tracking was not possible. However, before the Center closed the worker updated “My Senior Center Portal” so it will be easier in the future to do good reports.

Findings

Findings are presented in four sections. In her short tenure, the outreach worker/organizer has made progress on all four:

1. Outreach to and work with Waltham area agencies and organizations
2. Outreach to and work with Latinx older adults
3. Services/activities developed/enhanced
4. Future plans

1. Outreach to and work with Waltham area agencies and organizations

A major goal of the outreach worker/organizer is to reach out to other organizations serving (or potentially serving) Latinx seniors to let them know of the new position at the CoA and the goal of the CoA to better serve Latinx seniors. This should have several benefits – better services for Latinx seniors at the CoA, better connections for the CoA with other organizations serving Latinx seniors, and new activities/programming at the CoA with the help of partner organizations.

After training and orientation in November, the worker reached out through emails to community organizations about their resources and services for Spanish-speaking seniors. Organizations included AARP, Springwell, Kit Clark Senior Services in Boston, JF&CS, WATCH/CDC, and selected Waltham faith communities. These activities and results are summarized below.

St. Mary's Catholic Church: The outreach worker held an information session with approximately 50 Latinx members of St. Mary's in December. She used a Powerpoint to discuss resources in Waltham, e.g., the CoA, the TRIAD program. This resulted in requests for assistance from 8 Spanish-speaking seniors.

Other churches: The worker has tried to set up similar sessions at several other churches and had a tentative date at Centro de Adoracion in May and Sacred Heart (both cancelled). She has continued to send follow-up outreach letters and emails to other faith communities but so far has not made progress.

Springwell: In December the worker met with staff from Springwell in Newton, which is Waltham's core provider of home care and support. The worker learned that Springwell has no Spanish speakers on staff, so they use a web-based translating system when they receive inquiries in Spanish. They shared some

Spanish-language pamphlets and resources they use. The worker has referred two people to Springwell.

Latino Health Insurance Program (LHIP). In December the worker connected with LHIP, which helps Latinos in the Eastern Massachusetts to access health insurance. It also provides health promotion programs in Spanish. The worker gained agreement from LHIP to do a presentation at the CoA in Spanish about their services and also to offer a diabetes self-management program in Spanish. These could not be delivered before the CoA closed in March.

WATCH/CDC: The worker had several discussions with the community organizer at WATCH, which provides a variety of services and supports to Waltham immigrants and others. The worker has referred several Latinx seniors to WATCH's citizenship program, employment help, and help on housing.

JF&CS: The worker connected with the JF&CS Dementia Café program and discussed holding a café for Spanish-speaking individuals.

Charles River Community Health Center: In January the worker connected with staff at the Charles River Health Center to share and obtain information about services for Spanish-speaking seniors. Later she met with outreach staff and management. Their largest population is Spanish-speaking seniors. They said they would help recruit more seniors. They developed a plan for the worker to go to the Center's health fair in August.

Latinos in Accion: (Jennifer – I believe you contacted them but I don't know what if anything resulted.)

Expand distribution of translated CoA newsletters: In January the worker identified new sites to hand off translated newsletters. She has not had a chance to talk to staff at the new sites.

2. Outreach to and work with Latinx Older Adults

The outreach worker has used several approaches to reaching out to, serving and organizing Latinx seniors. They include translating the CoA resource guide and other materials into Spanish, refining the CoA's membership list, holding a focus group with activist Latinx seniors, and providing direct help.

Translate materials: Five areas of translation stand out:

- In November the worker translated the CoA Resource Guide about supports and services for seniors in Waltham into Spanish and got it printed and posted.

- The January CoA newsletter, including the Spanish version, introduced the worker to the community. The newsletter also contained a Waltham Connections newsletter with a more complete introduction (in Spanish and English) and a photo (see Attachment B).
- In February the worker responded to a request from the Waltham TRIAD officer to translate the Vial of Life into Spanish. The vial is a program that allows individuals to have their complete medical information ready in their home for emergency personnel to reference during an emergency. Using a scanned version she recreated it in Publisher and printed a version with English on one side and Spanish on the other, which allows emergency workers to cross-reference the English questions. The TRIAD would like to have a Creole version.
- In February the worker updated the CoA's Spanish answering service message phone recording from a recording that the CoA's Latino van driver made months earlier.
- In February the worker translated materials to get Spanish on the Waltham Connections' Facebook page.

Refine the CoA membership list: In November the worker ran reports using the CoA database to obtain a list of Latinx members of the CoA. The database has a designation of ethnic origin that includes Latinx, but the designation has been done by staff rather than the individual seniors. The original list identified 119 members as Latinx. In December the worker phoned those members, recorded responses on a spreadsheet and refined the list to XX seniors (Jennifer – do you have the number?) who are actually of Spanish origin. This refined list will serve as a baseline for tracking whether the outreach work increases the number of Latinx members and also the activities in which they are participating. During the calls the worker told seniors about the translated resource guide and also about her position. The calls also yielded requests for individual help from the worker. Making the calls took all month.

Focus group of Latinx seniors: In December the worker organized and led a focus group of 8 Latinx seniors who have been active Connections volunteers. The goal was to tap their understanding of the experiences, questions and needs of other Latinx seniors. Among the issues and options identified were the following:

- Language can always be a barrier.
- Fear of using services because of fear of reporting to ICE.
- Large families and expectations that seniors will work for income and/or take care of children.
- Many men will age alone, since they will work as long as they are physically able in order to send money to family in their home country.
- Ask Latinx seniors to register for the senior center so that they are familiar with what is available if/when they need any services.

- Hold CoA information sessions in Spanish at several places of worship in Waltham.
- Transportation is often a problem due to lack of knowledge/assistance of navigating the system to obtain a license and/or use public transit.
- Lack of education on primary care.
- Lack of family/friends for support for those that are here alone (especially men).
- Lack of Insurance sends Latinx seniors to emergency rooms and they often miss follow-up care for chronic conditions.
- Activities that would likely interest Latinx seniors: Spanish dance class, diabetes education, screenings for diabetes, kidney disease and heart problems, support groups for seniors living alone, dominos, and celebrations of Latinx holidays.

Service to individuals:

The outreach and communications work described above has yielded a steady stream of Latinx seniors seeking help from the worker. To manage the work she created a spreadsheet of individual clients where she makes notes on needs (hearing tests, handyman, etc.) and actions (appointments, follow up calls).

The excerpts from the monthly notes below give a good sense of the volume and scope of her work with individual clients.

Nov & Dec

- Met with client re housing, transportation and fuel assistance.
- Emailed Officer Bailey (TRIAD) re a client's needs.

January

- Fuel assistance application (2)
- Housing application
- CoA registration (3)
- Tax prep program
- Meals at CoA (2)
- Cambridge CoA client who wanted help in Spanish, Mass Health and SNAP eligibility, hearing screening, case management

Feb:

- Client referred from a Waltham physician. Pressing needs for SHINE and MA Health.
- Urgent walk-in application for housing. This is the most common need. Late on rent. Referred to a shelter and day center for seniors. Needs follow up.
- Couple with issue with a neighbor. Referred to TRIAD. Continuing to follow up.
- Housing application. Hard to refer out because the agency may not have a Spanish speaker.

- Mailed rental help application for a client (denied). Maybe the program will have more funds in new year.
- Follow up calls – ongoing.
- Follow up meetings re fuel assistance (new documents), housing application update (3), registration at CoA.

3. Services/activities developed/enhanced

In addition to working with other agencies and with individual seniors, the job description asks the outreach worker/organizer to help existing CoA services more accessible to Spanish speaking seniors. She made progress on this and more, particularly in bringing new activities to the CoA. Again, here are brief descriptions of activities and accomplishments by month.

December

- Outlined possible activities/programs to be offered in Spanish.
- Created an electronic intake form available to all on the CoA shared folder.

January & February

- Worked with Waltham Connections on planning a Cinco de Mayo event at the CoA.
- Found a Spanish-speaking tax preparer who now offers help at the CoA on Tuesdays and Fridays.
- Helped Powers music school on their grant to increase diversity for its music classes. Connected them with St. Mary's and Ugandans, plus musical seniors at the CoA.
- Facilitated the offering of Spanish classes for English speakers at the CoA. A retired, bi-lingual Spanish teacher has volunteered to lead.
- Found a Zumba Gold teacher who will offer classes at the CoA in Spanish and English.
- Connected a Latina art specialist with CoA theater and arts program.
- Finalized plans for a diabetes class in Spanish at the CoA. Created recruitment plan, flyer and newsletter article.

March

- Cancelled everything, including meeting Alzheimers' Association to talk about a program in Spanish for seniors.

4. Future plans

An interview with the outreach worker/organizer after the CoA closed was an opportunity for the worker to share plans that will now have to wait.

- Reach out to a candidate she has identified for a Haitian Creole outreach worker/organizer.

- Table for Latino day (w/Latinos in Accion), Waltham Day, RiverFest, the Farmers' Market.
- Do a class with Officer Bailey and the community police officer who speaks Spanish.
- Expand Latinx outreach to newer immigrant groups, e.g., Guatemalans.
- Plan and conduct two events for Latinx seniors at the CoA on May 5 and September 18. The May date was planned as a small social/luncheon. September will be larger and in honor of Spanish Heritage Month.
- Get this all in the newsletter.

When the CoA reopens, the material in this report demonstrates that it will be valuable to re-activate a Latinx outreach worker/community organizer. The report details the work to be done: the community contacts that can be re-established, the information systems that can support the work, the types of needs Latinx seniors present, and the ways to improve access to and expand services and activities. Hopefully this successful demonstration will result in a permanent position.

Attachment A: Job Description

JOB DESCRIPTION-Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging
September, 2019

Latinx Outreach Coordinator (Part-Time)

Supervisor: Director, Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging ("Connections") and Healthy Waltham, in collaboration with the Waltham Council on Aging.

Specific Responsibilities/Tasks:

- 1) Reach out to community organizations that serve older adults in Waltham's Latinx community to inform them about both Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging activities and services as well as activities available through the CoA.
- 2) Make personal connections with Waltham Latinx older adults, obtain contact information of seniors, and invite them to discuss their experiences with Waltham services and activities. Develop an informal group of advisors who will help develop ideas for improvements and to advocate for same.
- 3) Provide assistance, as needed to Latinx older adults to utilize community resources for health, education and social participation.
- 4) Advise CoA staff and Connections volunteers around understanding the needs and wants of the Latinx community and to address those needs/wants.
- 5) Plan and be available for 1-2X/month program(s) at the CoA/Senior Center. This will begin to provide an extended welcome to Latinx seniors.

- 6) Help with distribution of informative Spanish language flyers and newsletters to places frequented by Spanish speaking older adults throughout Waltham.
- 7) Increase Latinx attendance at regularly scheduled CoA programs and special events.
- 8) Participate in Connections events such as monthly Senior Food Pantries in Waltham Senior Housing sites and in social gatherings.
- 9) Reach out to community organizations that offer ESL or English conversation classes to provide at least one class at the CoA/Senior Center.
- 10) Attend regular meetings with supervisor(s) for guidance and assistance completing above responsibilities and/or special projects.

Skills & Qualifications:

- Bilingual English/Spanish; Bicultural Latinx preferred.
- Demonstrated cultural sensitivity as well as a base of knowledge of diversity and inclusion work.
- Experience with group facilitation.
- Competent written and verbal communication skills in Spanish and English.
- Demonstrated dependability, active listening and organizational skills.
- Team work, patience and willingness to accept feedback.
- Minimum, High School Diploma, relevant education and/or experience.
- Basic computer literacy and ability to communicate via email.

Conditions:

- Part-time, temporary grant-funded position, no benefits.
- Hours: 18-22 hours/month for 10 months.
- Weekly work schedule to be determined with supervisor.

Attachment B: Connections Winter 2020 Newsletter

(I am sending it as a separate file. I can't integrate it into this document. Can you help, Maria? Jennifer? Someone?)