Neighbors Empowered Program Report

The overarching goal of the Neighbors Empowered program is to provide the opportunity for women to break the cycle of poverty by building momentum & re-writing their future story.

The program has objectives in the short-term that include increasing readiness for change, identifying/addressing barriers, identifying/building resources, increasing knowledge (affordable housing, wages, hidden rules, language, conflict management, planning & time management, predatory lending & financial literacy) and making a plan for the future (SMART goal plan with small actions steps and a vision board). In the long-term, objectives are to improve overall quality of life (on a scale of in crisis to thriving), accomplish positive life changes that support a more stable life (income, employment, education, housing, transportation, health, parenting), and to become or remain ready for change.

Following completion of Cycle 7 in December 2018, VICRC set out to evaluate the program’s short & long term success, restructure the program as needed, and improve consistency in collecting & measuring participant data. Essentially, we felt compelled to analyze our learning from Cycles 1-7 to maximize the program’s overall effectiveness moving forward.

Evaluation of short-term results (gains & accomplishments during participant) found:

*YTD the program has achieved an 89.3% overall rate of retention, meaning women who enroll in the program complete the program.*

Of Cycles 2-7:

- 76% reported thinking more about making positive changes in their life.
- 84% reported more motivation and confidence in their ability to make positive changes.
- 88% reported more hope for the future/more excitement for the future/feeling more hopeful (excluding Cycle 4, question was not asked)

Of Cycles 4-7:

- 92% expressed increased awareness of resources
- 88% expressed increased awareness of barriers
- 77% reported overall improved self-sufficiency scores (excludes Cycle 5, a different toll was used as requested by a potential funder)

Additionally, many participants from Cycle 1-7 reported pursuing education goals, finding more stable employment & housing, working towards better health, improving community involvement and relationships with family members, etc.

Evaluation of long-term results (gains & accomplishments 6 months-4 years after graduation) found:

- 65% of responders reported their overall quality of life as stable or thriving.
- 96% reported making one or more positive changes in their life in areas of income, employment, education, housing, transportation, health, and parenting.
- 91% reported they had recently started or were already maintaining major positive changes in their life (indicates high level of readiness to change)
95% would rate the program 4 or 5 stars

Graduates reported changes in their life after graduation to include increasing hours at work or receiving a promotion, finding new employment with higher pay or better benefits, enrolling in school for Health Care Administration, graduating from Dental Assistant program (enrolled in during Neighbors Empowered), passing certification for phlebotomy, moving to better, stable housing, obtaining a new or better vehicle, pursuing a driver’s license, working towards better health by finding new doctors, losing weight, exercising, & changing eating habits, and improving relationships with children using skills learned in Neighbors Empowered.

Moving forward, we intend to restructure and expand our current program. Restructuring the program entails shortening the cycle length and driving content based on most impactful learning for participants post-graduation. To expand our current program, Valley Interfaith plans to double the number of cycles, and thus number of participants, per year from two to four cycles—or 40 potential graduates.

Cycles are expected to resume mid-2019. VICRC hopes to continue to receive support invested community members & institutions for funding as we move forward.