



Passport to Health/Taking Charge of Your Health: Empowering Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence to Become Their Own Health Advocate

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Background

- The Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing faculty manages three community nurse health and wellness centers that offer health promotion and education activities to primarily women, children and elders residing in East Baltimore.
- The Passport was initially created for the families of the Isaiah Wellness Center, to help seniors take charge of their health. Seniors use the passport to track their health care visits, record personal health information, provide anticipatory guidance for health care visits, and a space to record prescriptions information and medical appointments.

Abstract

Women and children who enter a homeless shelter to escape intimate partner violence (IPV) are at a pivotal transition in their lives. Navigating the complicated health care system is another obstacle they must overcome.

Nurse case management services at homeless shelters offer the unique opportunity to empower abused women by equipping them with the tools to make informed decisions regarding the health of both themselves and their children. Nurses are able to assist families with getting “back on track” with their health by assisting them with accessing health insurance programs, finding primary care providers and ensuring children are up to date on their immunizations and annual exams.

The goal of the project was to promote health literacy through the use of a health passport (pocket size booklet to store important health information) customized to meet the special needs of women and children IPV survivors.

Objectives

- Women survivors of IPV will use the Passport to Health
- Women and children survivors of IPV who use the Passport to Health will report increased health promotion and health maintenance behaviors.
- Women survivors of IPV who use the Passport to Health will report increased use of community based health resources.



Methods

- Each new resident at the shelter is encouraged to have an initial visit with the community health nursing staff.
- During this meeting the nurse will explain the Passport project and obtain informed consent.
- Once consented, the nurses conduct a complete health history and determine health care needs.
- Three educational sessions are provided to the women who enroll in the Passport project.
- The sessions include:
 - (1) introduction to the Health Passport and its use,
 - (2) health care needs for women, and
 - (3) health care needs for children.
- Faculty and students provide a follow-up visit with residents 12 weeks after their first session to determine if outcomes objectives were met.

Preliminary Findings

The following are preliminary observations from the women who are participating in the study:

- Receptive to the health teaching provided.
- Often utilize the health classes as an opportunity to share their concerns regarding their health and the health care system.
- Verbalize interest in using the health passport to record their medical information and take with them to medical appointments.
- Concern regarding attrition rate. Women require encouragement to complete all three classes.