

## **LIS Outreach Strategies: Community Superstars Q&A with Diana Weber, North Carolina**

The room was packed with people eager for new ideas about connecting with one of the hardest to reach populations, Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) eligible beneficiaries. As folders full of replicable materials were passed around the room, Diana Weber, Regional Manager for the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program ([SHIIP](#)) of North Carolina and her colleague, Wanda Moore of the Mid-East Commission, began to describe the Community Superstars Coalition.

The following Q&A with Diana accompanies a vibrant [power point presentation](#) delivered at the SHIP Directors conference in May. Together these materials demonstrate how to enlist the Superstars in your community and how to form a working partnership with them.

If you have further questions about North Carolina's Community Superstars project, please contact Diana at [dweber@ncdoi.net](mailto:dweber@ncdoi.net).

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### **Why build a Community Superstar Coalition?**

SHIPs across the country have discovered that we have to dig deeper to locate Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) eligible beneficiaries. Many LIS eligible beneficiaries do not frequent the sites where we normally provide outreach, such as senior centers, churches, and nutrition sites. In fact, many beneficiaries do not belong to any organized group whatsoever. The Community Superstars effort has proven to be an effective way to dig deeper into the beneficiary population and provide information and outreach to the beneficiaries who do not come to us for help, the ones who slip through the cracks.

We received a small grant from the Access to Benefits Coalition to pilot an LIS Outreach initiative in five counties in the eastern part of North Carolina. Our goal was to partner with community leaders and provide them with a basic level of information about the LIS program and eligibility requirements. We ask them to share it with potential beneficiaries who they come across in the community and refer these people to SHIP. This way the message of LIS is delivered in person by someone the beneficiary trusts. We do not ask the Community Superstar to become a Medicare or LIS expert, we only ask them to be on the lookout for potentially eligible beneficiaries and refer them to the SHIP with a personal recommendation that the SHIP program can assist them in applying for services for which they may be eligible.

### **How can SHIPs create a Community Superstars Coalition?**

We started by creating a Core Team to act as our decision makers and the "think tank." We selected people who already knew the importance of a successful LIS outreach initiative. Next, the Core Team devised a list of potential Community Superstars.

Each nominee had to be respected in the community and someone that Medicare beneficiaries seek out for information and advice, such as leaders in the minority- and faith-based communities, food bank managers, bankers, shop owners, hairdressers, retirees, etc. (for an extended list, please see slides 12-15).

The next step was to plan our Community Superstar event. The Core Team selected the date, time, and location. We suggest making the event festive. For example, one of our counties used a Luau theme (slides 17-22). Create invitations and mail them to the guest list. If your budget permits, provide refreshments or a light lunch.

At the Community Superstars event, start with introductions. Allow each person time to briefly describe their place and interest in the community. Setting up the tables in a big square allows attendees to see one another, and promotes better conversation. After the introductions, give a short explanation of your SHIP and Area Agency on Aging Services. Present a very brief and simple explanation of the Medicare Part D and LIS benefit, but keep it very simple and don't overwhelm your attendees with details.

Discuss acceptable, comfortable approaches they can use to offer this information to potentially eligible beneficiaries. Distribute plenty of flyers and business cards to your Superstars and encourage them to pass these on to their contacts in the community (slides 27-29). The final step is to plan for the next meeting. Encourage attendees to invite others so that your network will grow.

### **What results have you seen?**

We have far surpassed our goal and are now planning a Community Superstar event in all 100 counties of North Carolina. We have opened new lines of communication to hard-to-reach demographics, we have formed new partnerships for future projects, and we have created positive goodwill in our community.

North Carolina has generously offered a variety of its Community Superstar and LIS materials to the SHIP network for replication. Visit HAP's [Best Practices](#) section to download, modify, and begin using this expansive collection today.

- Invitation to Community Superstar Event
- Networking Chart
- Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan Finder Tool
- And more...

HAP can help you modify these tools, simply email us at [shiphelp@hapnetwork.org](mailto:shiphelp@hapnetwork.org)