

**2005 Collaboration Award Winner  
Collaboration with Community Partners**

***The 19130 Zip Code Service Learning Project***

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The 19130 Zip Code Service Learning Project represents the Community College of Philadelphia nursing department's commitment to a new community-based approach to curriculum design. By extending the primary health care services currently available in zip code partnership agencies, nursing faculty and students believe that involvement in the 19130 Zip Code Project will make a positive, lasting difference in the lives of our students and our community.

In the mid 1990's, nursing faculty at Community College of Philadelphia realized that, even with their deep commitment to students and to the health of Philadelphians, the nursing department did not know and fully understand the health care needs of the neighborhood around the College. It quickly became apparent that a wide variety of health care services, previously unknown to faculty, existed within the immediate College neighborhood. Based on this assessment, faculty designed the 19130 Zip Code Project as a service-learning undertaking to provide health promotion and disease prevention services in the local community around the College. The Independence Foundation of Philadelphia, has funded the project since its inception in 1996.

Concepts of community-based care, issues of cultural competence, and principles of collaborative, interdisciplinary care delivery of health promotion/disease prevention services are introduced in the first year of the curriculum and are enhanced/expanded in subsequent semesters. In the second year of the nursing program, all nursing students

spend six weeks engaged in delivery of health promotion/disease prevention services in the 19130 Zip Code Project. The Project is designed to foster collaborative relationships with neighborhood agencies to meet local nursing needs and to provide health promotion and disease prevention services to targeted groups in partner agencies. These services are characterized by on-going assessment of the needs of individuals and families, collaboration with agency staff, sensitivity to the needs of culturally diverse populations and a strong emphasis on health education. Activities undertaken by the Department of Nursing in the local neighborhood have focused primarily on target groups served by partner agencies and on expansion of health promotion and disease prevention services determined to be essential to the mission of these agencies.

Currently, health promotion/disease prevention services are provided by second-year nursing students under the supervision of nursing faculty two days/week for six hours/day during the academic year. Faculty, students, and Community Nursing Interns collaborate to accommodate requests for additional services (i.e., weekends, evenings, and summer). Students and faculty provide these services during more than 5,500 encounters with individuals and families in the local community throughout the academic year.

Over the course of the project, faculty have determined that the following benefits for students and for the residents of the local community exist as a result of the Nursing Department's involvement in the 19130 Zip Code Service-Learning Project:

- Development of a Community-Based Model to Educate Nursing Professionals

Students at Community College of Philadelphia are intrinsically community-based. Nursing students at the college typically live, work, and

complete their education within the Philadelphia community. Eighty percent of the College's nursing graduates remain in Philadelphia to serve their neighbors as RNs, contributing to the health and economy of the region. They are rooted deeply into the community. Projects like the 19130 Zip Code Project provide these students with a foundation to plan nursing care that is responsive to community-based nursing needs. Their frame of reference for the provision of health care to diverse groups is firmly grounded in an understanding of the need for a continuum of care, with the local neighborhood as the common ground for delivery of essential services.

- Development of a Cadre of Minority Nurses to Address Health Disparities

Currently, racial/ethnic minorities comprise about 47 percent of the nursing students at Community College of Philadelphia. During their experiences in the 19130 zip code community, minority students often interact as nurses, for the first time, in environments where their cultural group is dominant. They often realize, for the first time, that a career in nursing is not necessarily acute-care-based and that meeting the health care needs of vulnerable populations in local neighborhoods is important and compelling work. Based on their experiences in a wide variety of community care settings, students from minority backgrounds become confident in their ability to pursue advanced degrees in nursing, and are committed to working in underserved communities to tackle health disparities and meet the health care needs of the emerging majority.

- Development of a Service Learning Model to Deliver Cost-Effective Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Services and Expand Neighborhood Resources

Increasing services to vulnerable populations by extending existing services is less costly than creating new models of care. As part of their learning, nursing students design and offer health promotion and disease prevention programs that meet the needs of individuals and families in the local neighborhood. Assessment of the neighborhood's needs indicates that health promotion and disease prevention strategies are often neglected in local agencies because of more pressing health and safety needs. School nurses, for example, often find their health promotion goals and program displaced by the immediate needs of children who come to school sick or in crisis. By making the delivery of primary health care programs a part of every nursing student's education, service to clients in the zip code is expanded at minimal cost.

In student logs, two students talked about their perceptions of the benefits of their participation in the 19130 Zip Code Project.

*The Zip Code Project is very important to me, because I live very near to the neighborhood where many of the sites are located. When I first heard about the Zip Code Project, I thought that it had very little significance to me. After we were sent out to our community rotation, I found out exactly how significant it was not only to me, but also to many people who live in the surrounding communities. The Zip Code is important to me as well as other residents, because of the way it serves the population. We go out to the schools, daycare centers, and rest homes and ask questions and assess each individual situation. The project listens to what residents perceive as their needs and tries to help them meet their needs, instead of deciding for them what they think their needs are. The Zip Code Project has shown us to identify the needs of individuals, as well as large groups. The work that is completed by each group doesn't end when the rotation is over, but is passed on as building blocks for the next rotation. This is important so that each new group knows that they have a responsibility to live up to not only their own expectations, but also those of the previous students, residents, and teachers.*

Faith Brown, Class of 2002

*Many people, me included, think of a nurse only in an acute care setting and people as patients in a sick bed. The 19130 Zip Code Project opened my eyes to the world of nursing beyond the hospital door, enabling me to see people not as patients but as individuals with a purpose, important roles in their community. This concept is best understood through the 19130 Zip Code Project experience. Here is a small synopsis of what I tell others.*

*The community is a circle of nurturing, it's where nursing begins, teaching clients about their own health, with prevention as a focus and where nursing goals are ultimately achieved, returning the person to their home as a viable functioning member of that neighborhood. Since the client is in the community setting for the majority of his/her life, focusing our efforts in that area I have learned to take a more proactive role in my own community. In the future I hope to incorporate what I have learned from my community rotation in dealing with my own clients. I plan to remember that the most essential outcome of nursing is to keep people as a healthy part of their community.*

Angela Doherty, Class of 2004