



As part of our strategy to spread promising program models to improve the health of at-risk populations in underserved communities, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is investing almost \$750,000 to support the expansion of *Vote & Vax* clinics throughout the United States.

THE SITUATION

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza (flu) causes roughly 36,000 deaths per year. People 50 years and older and those with chronic conditions account for the majority of these deaths. To address this problem, the CDC recommends that all adults 50 years of age and older be vaccinated.

THE PROBLEM

Unfortunately—despite extensive public outreach efforts—about half of adults 50 years of age and older fail to receive their annual flu vaccination. Among Hispanics and African Americans in that same age group, the rates of individuals not receiving a vaccination are even higher.

A PROMISING SOLUTION

Of the roughly 125 million Americans who vote in national elections, almost 70 percent are 50 years of age or older. This is exactly the age group for which flu shots are recommended.

Beginning in 2004, several local health agencies took advantage of this opportunity to offer flu vaccinations at polling sites to those who need them most. Under the direction of SPARC (Sickness Prevention Achieved through Regional Collaboration), with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the *Vote & Vax* project was established. To date more than 30 *Vote & Vax* pilot projects have been successfully tested and implemented in several states—and have resulted in an increased number of vaccinations among the 50 years of age and older population.

THE BENEFITS

The benefits of *Vote & Vax* project are many. The most important being that people who should be getting their flu shot but do not typically seek them out are able to get vaccinated in a manner that is convenient and targeted. In short, more people will be protected against the flu as a result of *Vote & Vax*.

According to findings from the 2006 *Vote & Vax* clinics:

- More than 80 percent of adult vaccine recipients at the *Vote & Vax* clinics were in CDC-defined priority groups.
- Almost 30 percent of the total number of adults vaccinated through *Vote & Vax* reported that they had not received a flu shot in the prior year.
- Three-fourths of the agencies that sponsored the *Vote & Vax* clinics found them to be among the largest vaccination clinics they had ever conducted that year.



Participating provider organizations also benefit:

- ***Vote & Vax* is good for a provider's bottom line.** The clinics attract large numbers of persons with whom providers do not otherwise have contact and therefore increase provider revenues. *Vote & Vax* activities lead to large clinics, making them efficient and cost-effective for providers.
- ***Vote & Vax* is a great opportunity to increase community awareness about the importance and role of local public health agencies.** Many people are often not fully aware or have misconceptions of what health departments or visiting nurse agencies (VNAs) do and who they serve. *Vote & Vax* is a way to "market" health departments and VNAs; letting community members know that their local agency is a friendly, responsive and effective organization. In addition, *Vote & Vax* provides agencies valuable experience in emergency preparedness in the event that a mass immunization is ever needed.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

For Election Day 2008, SPARC and RWJF are expanding the *Vote & Vax* project nationwide. On November 4, 2008, we hope to hold vaccination clinics at more than 1,000 polling places across the country. This effort will be coordinated between local, regional and national vaccine providers who will become participating partners in the 2008 *Vote & Vax* project.

Participating provider organizations will be given detailed guidance on how to organize a vaccine clinic in collaboration with local election authorities. All partners will also receive marketing packets to promote the *Vote & Vax* program in their communities. The packets will include posters and press release and media advisory templates that can be customized. As part of the program, partner providers will also receive ongoing technical assistance.

At its most simple level, the *Vote & Vax* project is about providing vaccines to vulnerable populations, at a location and time where we know they will already be. In the broader context, it is about leading through innovation, promoting good public health and saving lives.

Vote & Vax is a winning strategy for health care providers and their communities. To learn more about the project and how to participate, please visit www.voteandvax.org or e-mail inquiries to info@sparc-health.org.

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ABOUT SPARC

SPARC (Sickness Prevention Achieved through Regional Collaboration) is a nonprofit health organization dedicated to developing innovative approaches to the delivery of basic disease prevention services. With community partners, SPARC launched its first *Vote & Vax* clinics in 1997 and the agency has been instrumental in the subsequent national expansion of this work. SPARC has been recognized as a model program by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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