Puerto Rico Youth Health Careers (PRYHC)
Guayama, Arroyo and Ponce, Puerto Rico

Program Model: Grades 11 – 12
Industry Focus: Health Care

Overview of Puerto Rico Youth Health Careers YCC Program
With the healthcare infrastructure of Puerto Rico in a severely weakened condition, the Puerto Rico Youth Health Careers (PRYHC) Program is answering the need for healthcare workforce development. The program was designed with these goals:

- support high schools in the development of academic and career learning curriculum;
- and develop individualized plans to enhance students’ learning skills and their exposure to the world of work in health occupations.

Conceptualized using an ecological model, PRYHC offers tutoring, mentoring, career counseling, university courses, internships, and leadership seminars to facilitate the transition between the high school and university experience.

Program Highlight
The main program highlight has been the joint effort by the universities, parents, schools, and community health centers to prepare students for work in the health field. The community health centers provided shadowing experiences during an internship component, which was highly successful with over 90% of the students participating. The universities offered a 3-credit course as a bridge between high school and university study. ASPIRA of Puerto Rico furnished tutoring services and health professions integration in the curriculum. And thanks to volunteer health providers, we were also able to administer mentoring services, health camps, and leadership seminars.

Success Story
The PRYHC Program has yielded many success stories. Most of our students have increased their academic average, identified their career goals, and were admitted to universities. Through internships, exposure to the world of work, and individual career counseling they gained a better understanding of themselves and the opportunities available to them.
As PRYHC alumni Francisco Rivera expressed:

“I defined my health career goal during the program and decided that I would like to become a pharmacist. Now, I’m a student at the Interamerican University – Guayama Campus, in the Chemistry Bachelor Program with a minor in Bio-technology. At the same time, I’m working as a Marketing Representative in a Health Insurance Company, who selected me because I have PRYHC Credentials.”

**Community Impact**

The PRYHC has established a solid network among our high schools, universities, community health centers, and other community organizations and volunteers. The resulting positive impact is being seen in three sectors of our community:

**Our schools:**
This is the only such federal program supporting students in the southeast part of the island, and its effect is evident in the higher percentage of students to be admitted to colleges and universities.

**Our community:**
The local population has benefited from the prevention activities offered by students in the program.

**Our employers:**
Community Health Centers have been impacted positively by the preceptorships and mentoring services they offered to the students, which were mutually beneficial.

Through our Advisory Committee we developed a strong flow of communication during the last four years, which we hope to maintain. The Puerto Rico Academy of Medical Directors will continue to offer mentoring services with health provider volunteers and leadership seminars for high school students in the three public schools.

**Puerto Rico Youth Health Careers (PRYHC)**
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