

# Colorado

## Promoting Awareness for Colorectal Cancer Screening

### Public Health Problem

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the nation. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and other organizations have reviewed the evidence and recommend colorectal cancer screening for all adults 50 or older. Although screening has been proven to save lives and prevent cancer, screening rates for colorectal cancer continue to be low. In 2001, approximately 26% of Colorado adults aged 50 years or older reported having had a fecal occult blood test in the previous year, and approximately 37% reported having had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy in the previous 5 years. Screening rates were similar for men and women, but non-Hispanic whites were twice as likely as Hispanics to report having had screening tests.

### Program Example

Investigators at the University of Colorado collaborated with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and Kaiser Permanente of Colorado to determine whether colorectal cancer screening rates could be increased among 1,100 Kaiser members aged 50–74 years, half of whom were Hispanic. One-third of the members received an educational brochure, tailored to their sex and race and ethnicity, along with a letter from Kaiser encouraging them to go for screening. One-third of the members received the brochure followed by a motivational telephone call. The remaining third of members received neither the brochure nor the call. All members were then contacted 4 months later to inquire about their colorectal screening practices, attitudes, and beliefs. Members who received educational materials, including Hispanic members, were more likely to be screened for colorectal cancer than those who did not. This 2001–2002 study supports earlier research findings, which show that encouraging people to request screening tests can increase rates of screening.

### Implications and Impact

This effective intervention was the result of the collaboration and support from the state's Comprehensive Cancer Control Program. Outcomes from the project are being used to create, conduct, and evaluate a widely disseminated mail-delivered cancer awareness campaign. Materials developed in the project have been modified to reach more people throughout the state and have been tailored to sex and race and ethnicity. The materials, approaches, and evaluation methods developed in this project will be made available to other states as a model campaign for promoting colorectal cancer awareness and screening.

### Contact Information

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