



News Release

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New initiative to ensure Latinos' end-of-life wishes are honored

ROCHESTER, NY – A community effort launched today will help educate local Latinos on the importance of making their end-of-life wishes known.

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield will work with The Community Place of Greater Rochester and the Ibero-American Action League to train staff and volunteers on the advance care planning process, including health care proxies. The proxy designates an individual to make health care decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so. Volunteers and staff will share their knowledge with the community.

"Anyone can face an unexpected illness or injury that leaves them unable to make health care decisions for themselves," said Patricia Bomba, MD, vice president and medical director/geriatrics, Excellus BCBS.

"We want to make sure that Rochester residents of all backgrounds and income levels have access to the education and documents needed to complete a health care proxy, and that they've talked to loved ones about their end-of-life wishes," she added.

Educating Latinos on how to pick the right representative and talk about their end-of-life wishes is part of an ongoing community effort that is also reaching out to college students, older adults and African Americans. Such outreach is critical since nearly nine out of 10 Rochester adults surveyed said completing a health care proxy is important, yet only about half of them had actually designated someone to be their proxy, according to a 2008 [Excellus BCBS report](#).

The Community Place plans to educate 200 older adults in the next year on the importance of advance care planning. They'll educate clients at their senior centers and educate volunteers who work with frail elders in their homes.

"Our population primarily speaks Spanish, so we want to make sure they can access information in their language and understand the importance of completing advance directives," said Katy Allen, director of the aging services department at The Community Place.

Ibero is familiarizing older Latino adults in its Centro de Oro Seniors program with advance care planning so they can make end-of-life decisions.

"Advance care planning is important for Latino seniors because they generally don't plan ahead for when crucial health care decisions need to be made," said Elisa DeJesus, vice president of the family service division of Ibero.

Spanish-language materials are being developed for the initiative. To access advance care planning materials in Spanish, go to CompassionAndSupport.org and click on "En Espanol" at the top of the page. CompassionAndSupport.org's [video library](#) also includes a video in Spanish.

This initiative is being launched in advance of National Healthcare Decisions Day on April 16. For more information on advance care planning, go to CompassionAndSupport.org or nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org. To access the Excellus BCBS report, *End-of-Life Care Survey of Upstate New Yorkers*, go to excellusbcbs.com/factsheets.

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The mission of the Ibero-American Action League is to foster growth and development, primarily of Hispanics, by providing advocacy, along with culturally sensitive programs and services, which are intended to raise their socio-economic status, well-being and citizenship awareness. To learn more, visit <http://www.iaal.org>

The Community Place of Greater Rochester, Inc. (CPGR) is a nonprofit agency whose mission is strengthening the community one person, one family at a time. We deliver a wide range of social, developmental, and educational programs delivered through our facilities in the northeast sector of the city of Rochester (NY) and throughout the greater Rochester area. To learn more, visit <http://www.communityplace.org>

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