

Colorado Immersion Training in Community Engagement: Charting the Course Toward More Meaningful Community Engagement

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Background: In alliance with the goals of the Clinical and Translational Sciences Award program, Colorado Immersion Training in Community Engagement (CIT) is a community-campus partnership that aims to introduce an expanded pool of researchers to community-based participatory research (CBPR) and community engagement (CE).

Objectives: To describe CIT components and preliminary results.

Methods: CIT attempts to support a change in the research trajectory of academic health researchers, program developers, and graduate students towards community engagement. The program occurs on campus and in six community settings: urban African American, urban Asian and Refugee, urban Latino, urban American Indian/Alaska Native, rural northeast Colorado, and rural San Luis Valley. Components include a 4-week Directed Reading, Seminar on CBPR, 4-day community immersion, Reflection, and 6-month support. Evaluation describes recruitment, implementation, and participants' understanding of CBPR and skills post-training.

Results: 7 cohorts have completed the training. A comprehensive curriculum was developed to address principals of CBPR, health disparities, 3) listening to community, 4) self-reflection, and 5) engagement tools. Community immersions expose participants to a community's culture and opportunities to discuss health issues with a range of community members. Local "community guides" enhance participants' experience. About 90% of participants changed the way they plan to approach their research, 94% changed how they viewed community involvement in research, and 77% learned new skills to help engage communities in research. Conclusions: CIT applies to and positively impacts researchers from a variety of disciplines. **Conclusions:** CIT creates opportunities for long lasting partnerships between researchers and communities.