

Biography

Yuriko de la Cruz *Program Support Specialist*



In July 2008, Yuriko de la Cruz joined the team at PROCEED, Inc.'s National Center for Training, Support, and Technical Assistance by assuming the role of Program Support Specialist. In this position, she is responsible for managing the national consultant pool, staying abreast on current resources and literature, and providing support to staff in planning and executing program related activities. Yuriko brings to the team an abundance of knowledge and experience in the areas of community mobilization and development, cultural competency, youth empowerment, and HIV/AIDS prevention and education.

She began her career in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention as an advocate for educational programs targeting youth and empowering them to make healthy lifestyle choices. Yuriko received formal education at West Chester University in Pennsylvania and completed a Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Health. During her academic experience, she was a proponent of developing culturally competent programs to support first-year multi-cultural students as well as fostering social support networks amongst students, staff, and faculty at the university in order to create mentoring opportunities.

Upon graduation, she served as a Community Health Volunteer with the U.S. Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic, where she worked in the areas of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Family Nutrition, and Women's Reproductive Health as well as organizational and program development. As a liaison between community members and local government and non-government organizations, Yuriko was able to solidify their collaborative relationships by conducting community assessments and planning sessions, which led to the development of community driven programs. Recognizing that the effectiveness and sustainability of community health programs rested on the capabilities of personnel at the local agencies, Yuriko conducted various trainings geared towards strengthening institutional infrastructure and also facilitated trainings on HIV awareness and prevention, social investigation techniques, utility of focus groups, program planning and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. With funding from PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) and USAID, she was able to train local youth as Peer Educators in HIV Prevention as well as community leaders, teachers, and clinic staff as Community Health Promoters.

Following her service abroad, she was able to apply the knowledge and skills attained during her responsibilities of coordinating the community health programs at La Casa de Don Pedro and later on at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), both located in Newark, NJ.

Yuriko is thrilled to be a member of the NCTSTA team, as she aims to complement their efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. She is actively engaged in her professional development and is planning on pursuing her Masters of Public Health (MPH) Degree in the near future.