

# "The Cancer You Can Prevent" Campaign Increases Colorectal Cancer Screenings

Luci Longoria

## At A Glance

Since 2010, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) promoted a media campaign through tailored messaging. Now in its sixth year, "The Cancer You Can Prevent" campaign focuses on increasing colorectal cancer screening in African American, Native American, and Latino communities. Findings indicate that these communities are more receptive to CRC screening messages delivered by someone they know and trust. By using culturally competent communications, this campaign has increased screenings and decreased the number of late-stage CRC diagnoses in Oregon.

## Public Health Challenge

According to the State Cancer Registry, colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second most deadly cancer for both men and women in Oregon. Fortunately, screenings and early detection can save lives. CRC almost always begins with abnormal growths, called precancerous polyps, which can be detected through a colonoscopy, one of the recommended CRC screening tests. Polyps can be removed before they develop into cancer. CRC screenings also help doctors find cancer at an early stage, when treatment is most effective. Despite the rising rate of CRC screening in Oregon, in 2015, 31% of Oregon adults aged 50 to 75 reported not being current on CRC screening.



## Find Out More

**"The Cancer You Can Prevent" campaign supports state and local health officials, employers, community organizations, and health systems in CRC screening promotion. Messages convey that screening is key to preventing colorectal cancer, finding it at an early stage, and surviving it. To encourage people to get screened, this campaign engages Oregonians by asking community members to share their story with others. For more information and to share your story, visit [www.thecanceryoucanprevent.org](http://www.thecanceryoucanprevent.org).**

## Approach

Since 2010, OHA has run a CRC screening campaign to appeal to Oregon's diverse communities. The most recent campaign conducted 9 focus groups and 18 one-on-one interviews with African Americans and Native Americans in rural and urban cities that have higher rates of late-stage diagnosis. Because Latinos report the lowest screening rates in Oregon, OHA conducted another focus group to create culturally appropriate messages and materials in Spanish. Participants in these focus groups were most receptive to messages delivered by people they know and trust, so OHA created a campaign featuring community members sharing stories and encouraging others to get screened.

## Results

Launched in nine communities, the campaign used people previously screened to share their experiences and encourage others to get screened. The campaign was promoted using paid radio ads in Spanish and English, social media, websites, billboards, health plans, and local news outlets. Two panel surveys conducted in 2012 and 2014 measured the number of people reached in those communities and the likelihood that they would get screened. Results from the campaign showed the following successes: • Screenings among Oregonians aged 50 to 75 increased from 59% to 69% from 2010 to 2015. • Diagnoses of late-stage CRC in the state dropped 12% from 2009 to 2013. • “The Cancer You Can Prevent” website had 25,954 visits and 48,524 page views from February 2015 to February 2017.

### Contact

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*People are most likely to get screened if they are encouraged by someone else who has been screened for colorectal cancer. The campaign encourages congregations, coworkers, neighbors, and loved ones to talk about their experiences.*

- Luci Longoria

## What's Next

The campaign is completing its sixth year with no end in sight. It continues to encourage Oregonians to share their stories about getting screened for CRC. Campaign materials are available to help spread the word in faith-service bulletins, newsletters, websites, and social media. The campaign will expand its reach to educate and increase CRC screening to more segments of the population. Since 2014, the campaign has specifically targeted health systems and clinics to increase their use of patient and provider reminder systems. These efforts align with the Medicaid incentive performance measure for CRC screening.