

EAST TEXAS RURAL FISCAL AND PHYSICAL OUTREACH PROGRAM
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Purpose: The East Texas Rural Fiscal and Physical Outreach Program (ETRFPO) is a combined effort of the College of Nursing and the College of Business at the University of Texas at Tyler. The aim of ETRFPO is to improve both the fiscal and physical health of existing businesses and healthcare providers within a five county area in East Texas. The program has completed a needs assessment report to document the educational and service needs of health care providers of the region in the following counties: Smith, Anderson, Rusk, Cherokee and Titus. The program has established a network with health care organizations in the area and is working to develop resources for the creation and delivery of quality educational bilingual programs.

Method: A pilot study was conducted to validate the Needs Assessment Survey. The survey was mailed out to approximately 420 participants with a Response rate of 19 %. These findings were analyzed to understand barriers to online education.

Initial Findings:

1. There is an under representation of healthcare workers that have specialized training, such as Spanish, geriatrics, and other special interest training, as compared to the proportion of the population of clients.
2. The most desired course offerings are courses which deal with management issues such as computer training, billing, legal issues, financial and risk management issues, and other similar organizational subjects.
3. Participants are familiar with online courses, have access to computer resources that would allow them to participate in the courses, however, are not committed to using those resources.
4. Participants appeared to see the value in online learning resources. This did not, however, appear to be related to the participants planning, intention or predictions of online learning use.

Discussion: ETRFPO contracted with a distance education provider to make streaming video lectures available via the Internet and to conduct a one day boot-camp for UT Tyler faculty to learn specific techniques regarding presentations via streaming video. Guest speakers from the faculty of the University of Texas at Tyler, staff at The University of Texas Health Center at Tyler, and faculty at The University of Texas at Arlington provided content for pertinent healthcare and business topics. ETRFPO is collaborating with The University of Texas Health Center at Tyler for their provision of continuing education credit for applicable sessions. Team members are planning onsite sessions to help participants identify and use online resources more effectively.