



News Release



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STATE OFFICE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH ANNOUNCES 2011 HELEN RODRIGUEZ-TRIAS AWARD RECIPIENT

SACRAMENTO – Melinda Cordero-Bárzaga is this year's recipient of the Helen Rodriguez-Trias Award, an annual recognition of a Californian who has raised awareness of health issues facing women. The award is presented in conjunction with Women's Health Month by the Office of Women's Health (OWH) within the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

Ms. Cordero-Bárzaga was hired in 1991 by Planned Parenthood to implement an innovative Latina outreach and education program for women in East Los Angeles. She used the promotoras model in which women in the community are educated to act as liaisons between community residents in need of health care services and health care institutions and providers. The promotoras network she developed provides peer-to-peer health education and has become a major and permanent contributor to improving the health of Latinas throughout California. There are now more than 1,000 promotoras attending Ms. Cordero-Bárzaga's annual conference.

"Melinda Cordero-Bárzaga's contributions to the Latina community are inspiring," said DHCS Director Toby Douglas. "Through her work, women have improved access to better educational materials about their health care, in particular the vitally important area of reproductive health."

CDPH Interim Director Dr. Howard Backer added: "Ms. Cordero-Bárzaga's work has empowered thousands of women in California. She has taught women to not only have a voice for their health and that of their communities, but how to become leaders themselves."

Ms. Rodriguez-Trias was a pioneer in advancing women's health and a strong force in the fight for women's reproductive freedom and women's and children's health care rights. She challenged racial and gender inequities in health care and was actively involved with the growing problem of HIV/AIDS infection among women and children.

Ms. Cordero-Bárzaga's vision of an empowered community happened in 2001 when she co-founded *Visión y Compromiso* to work on advocacy and policy work that would further the work she started with the promotoras program. In 2004, she became director of the California Network of Promotoras and Community Health Workers.

OWH encourages organizations and providers throughout the state to become involved in raising awareness about women's health in California. Additional information about Women's Health Month is available on the OWH Web sites at <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/owh> or www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/OWH or by calling (916) 440-7626.

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