COVID-19 health equity initiatives: The Public Health Alliance of Southern California

In this installment of "COVID-19 health equity initiatives," learn how the Public Health Alliance of Southern California works to support its members in improving population health and advancing equity for disproportionately impacted low-income communities and communities of color.

Overview of initiative

Public Health Alliance of Southern California Vaccine Equity Video Series

The Public Health Alliance of Southern California’s Vaccine Equity Video Series aims to elevate promising and replicable practices for equitable vaccine distribution. The series works to showcase community-informed and equity-centered practices that specifically aim to reach disproportionately impacted low-income Californians and Californians of color.

The series showcases two efforts to reach disproportionately impacted communities in Southern California:

- **Black and Well in the LBC**
  A faith-based mobile clinic partnership that works with older Black adults in Long Beach, California. On Feb. 10, the city launched a mobile clinic for Black adults in partnership with community-based partners Elite Skills Development and the Long Beach Minister’s Alliance. The clinic event, “Black and Well in the LBC,” successfully vaccinated over 200 older adults, 95% of whom identified as Black or African American.

- **Strategies for Reaching Farmworkers in Vaccine Distribution**
  Riverside County Public Health Department, in partnership with the Coachella Valley Equity Collaborative (spearheaded by the Desert Healthcare District & Foundation (DHCD) and community-based partners, like TODEC), launched mobile vaccination clinics that brought COVID-19 vaccines directly to farmworkers in the fields with critical funding support from the Public Health Institute’s "Together Towards Health" initiative. Community-based partners helped register farmworkers, who have been some of the most impacted community members due to COVID-19, in person during registration events at their worksites. They worked to answer questions in preferred languages, including indigenous languages such as Purépecha. Partners in these efforts worked to address a broad range of concerns during
vaccine registration and administration, including concerns related to vaccine side effects, immigration status and public charge. The mobile vaccination clinics have successfully vaccinated well over 5,000 farmworkers throughout the Eastern Coachella Valley.

"While the media narrative has often focused on vaccine hesitancy in communities of color, many community-based partners are focused instead on ensuring adequate supply and access for Black, Indigenous and other communities of color."
—Marley Williams, health equity & justice manager, Public Health Alliance

What was the impetus for the racial equity work?

The “Public Health Alliance Vaccine Equity Video Series” focuses on elevating promising and replicable practices for advancing equity in vaccine distribution, and supports members and other local health departments throughout the country in ensuring those community members most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be prioritized in vaccine distribution efforts.

When did the work begin? When is it expected to end?

The alliance launched the vaccine equity video series in March 2021, by highlighting the first “promising practice,” focused on a faith-based, mobile clinic partnership to reach older Black adults in Long Beach, California. The alliance will continue to work to identify and produce videos highlighting equity-informed, community-based strategies for reaching disproportionately impacted residents of color in vaccine distribution efforts throughout the response.

What are the expected results or outcomes?

Increased focus on community-based strategies for reaching disproportionately impacted individuals and communities of color in vaccine distribution and administration
Implementation of community-based, equity-centered strategies in vaccine distribution

Who are the key partners for this work?

Local health departments and other governmental partners
Community-based partners who represent and/or serve disproportionately impacted individuals and communities

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Philanthropy that aims to support equitable, community-informed distribution strategies
Faith-based partners working to support local vaccination distribution efforts

What are your future steps for this initiative?

The Public Health Alliance of Southern California is also spotlighting two initiatives in cities outside of California. The first is Chicago’s efforts to advance vaccine equity with their Protect Chicago Plus aimed at reaching Black and Latinx Chicagoans. The second is the partnership between the St. Louis Health Department and the St. Louis Housing Authority to reach disproportionately impacted community members in vaccine distribution. New video spotlights will be added on a regular basis.

What advice & recommendations do you have?

The need to partner with trusted, community-based partners to reach the individuals and communities most vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 cannot be overstated. Community-based and equity-informed efforts are critical to reaching communities of color in vaccine distribution. It is also critical to work with public and private funders to support both local health department and community partners who are doing the time consuming and labor intensive work to reach all eligible members of their communities.

Contact information

For more information about the Public Health Alliance of Southern California initiative, please contact: Marley Williams, health equity and justice manager at mwilliams@phi.org.

Additional resources

The Public Health Alliance Vaccine Equity Video Series: Promising & actionable practices for local health departments

Find out about other initiatives

Black Arizona COVID-19 Task Force
Cambridge Health Alliance (Massachusetts)
Chicago Racial Equity Rapid Response Team
Meharry Medical College
Michigan Public Health Institute
Milwaukee Health Department
New York City Department of Health
Spectrum Health Lakeland
UC San Diego Refugee Health Unit

Visit the COVID-19 health equity initiatives main page for additional information.