

WE ARE PUBLIC HEALTH

BY CALIFORNIA'S LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

TARGETING RESOURCES TO DELIVER HEALTH EQUITY

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic shined a light on systemic health disparities, California's local public health departments were developing programs and services and targeting resources to improve health equity and address the social determinants of health that disproportionately impact communities of color.

When COVID-19 began to spread across California, local public health departments leaned on their equity expertise in response to the virus, understanding that underserved populations faced outsized risks and required unique strategies and targeted resources for education and outreach.

The Alameda County Health Care Services Agency quickly reorganized their COVID-19 case investigators during an early rise in the Omicron variant to target resources and information to high-risk populations. Case investigators prioritized outreach and education calls to older adults and families of young children who were most likely to experience severe disease or be unvaccinated due to eligibility constraints. These efforts helped keep community members informed of changes to local and state guidance around COVID-19 quarantine and isolation mitigation measures and slowed the spread just as the more contagious Omicron variant was becoming a more dominant strain.

Latest updates in this issue:

- DELIVERING HEALTH EQUITY - 1
- HEALTH EQUITY PARTNERSHIPS - 2
- PATHWAYS PROGRAM-4





The San Mateo County Public Health Department's Health Policy and Planning Epidemiology team played a key role guiding the county's COVID-19 emergency response with a health equity lens. Most recently the Epidemiology team convened to explore root causes around underreporting of race and ethnicity data associated with vaccine administration. Their team was able to match their existing data with COVID-19 testing data and San Mateo County's Medi-Cal managed care plan to fill in crucial race and ethnicity information that has helped inform decision making and direct resources to impacted communities.

Expanding and building the future epidemiology workforce pipeline remains a priority for CHEAC. The #CACantWait Coalition's [#PublicHERO Initiative](#) includes a \$6.5M investment in the California Department of Public Health's [Epidemiologic Investigation Service Fellowship Program](#), among other vital investments. This crucial funding will help place 100 fellows in the training program to prepare epidemiologists for leadership positions in state and local public health.

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS LEAD AND COORDINATE HEALTH EQUITY PARTNERSHIPS

Over more than a decade, a shrinking pool of investments in state and local public health deteriorated our public health infrastructure and workforce and put unnecessary roadblocks in the way of crucial health equity work. Despite these challenges, local public health departments continue to lead the way, convening local stakeholders and providing crucial data necessary to develop, coordinate, and deliver comprehensive local solutions to address a broad range of public health threats, including COVID-19.

As part of their COVID-19 outreach and education initiatives, the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency partnered with the Valley Children's Hospital to release a Public Service Announcement (PSA) encouraging at-risk populations to get vaccinated. The release of the PSA preceded a town hall event the county and partners hosted in early January with the



Cutler-Orosi School District and the Valley Children's Hospital to answer community questions and provide expert information to counter vaccine misinformation and disinformation. The town hall helped the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency set the stage for a successful vaccine administration event held in collaboration with Valley Children's Hospital, California Farmer Foundation, United Farm Workers, and American Ambulance that resulted in the administration of 101 first doses and 114 booster shots.

Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, the County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency developed a [Community Health Worker Communication and Outreach Collaborative](#) to support what would become one of the county's largest health equity initiatives, targeting resources to communities historically impacted by health disparities. The Collaborative had a combined workforce of 300 community health workers speaking 26 different languages to help bolster existing public health preventive measures. In addition, the Collaborative deployed a variety of culturally relevant strategies around prevention, testing, isolation/quarantine measures, treatment, vaccination, and educational [videos](#), [flyers](#), and [vaccination events](#).

Los Angeles County's Department of Public Health also established a [Community Health Worker Outreach Initiative \(CHWOI\)](#) to partner with community-based organizations to mobilize and deploy support around the county's COVID-19 outreach and education initiatives throughout targeted communities. CHWOI helped to mobilize upwards of 500 community health workers who provided hundreds of thousands of people across LA County with culturally relevant and up-to-date information on COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, vaccination, and the importance of adhering to local public health preventive measures. In addition, the partnership helped connect residents with much needed critical services, including health insurance, mental health services, and other safety net services, such as food pantries and housing assistance. Earlier this month, LA County Department of Public Health reported CHWOI completed more than 450,000 outreach activities, including support for 2,500 in-person vaccination events and over 14,000 virtual COVID-19 educational sessions. Combined, these efforts have reached more than three million residents throughout Los Angeles County.

In Alameda County, the Health Care Services Agency launched their Direct Outreach to Our Residents (DOOR) program in partnership with local community-based organizations to conduct community outreach as part of the county's COVID-19 vaccine equity initiatives. The Agency's DOOR program uses health equity data to identify and target crucial resources to unvaccinated residents living in communities that are hardest hit by the pandemic. In November, the Agency announced major milestones in their vaccine equity initiatives with 81% of Hispanic/Latino and

74% of Black/African American residents 12 years and older receiving at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. As part of their ongoing efforts to address social determinants of health, Alameda County launched the Community Resilience Project, providing coalition partners extensive technical assistance and capacity building to address broader health and social issues across impacted communities.

#CACANTWAIT COALITION URGES NEW INVESTMENTS IN CRUCIAL PATHWAYS PROGRAM

Developing the future workforce pipeline to combat existing and emerging public health threats continues to be championed by CHEAC and #CACantWait Coalition through the [#PublicHERO Initiative](#). As part of the initiative, Coalition partners are urging new investments to expand the California Department of Public Health's successful [California Public Health Corps \(CA-PHC\) Training and Pathways Program](#) which placed 45 early-career public health professionals in local health departments across 37 jurisdictions, including in San Diego and Tulare counties.

In San Diego County, the Health and Human Services Agency welcomed two participants from the CA-PHC program. Alexis Lopez joined the county's Public Health Preparedness and Response team and quickly became a key member of the ongoing COVID-19 response efforts on the Medical Operations Center Logistics team. Loise Jensen joined the HIV, STD, and Hepatitis Branch and has been focused on completing training to become a Communicable Disease Investigator.

The Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency was also given the opportunity to host two CA-PHC participants. Jennifer M. joined the department to help facilitate health equity initiatives addressing COVID-19 education and outreach, particularly around vaccines for vulnerable populations and individuals in detention facilities. She is also leading a \$25k grant for National Public Health Week 2022, with a focus on project planning and implementation, which includes hosting 3 vaccine events and collaborating with other departments on other public health initiatives. Gladys B. joined the department to co-facilitate National Public Health Week and lead the production of a career-focused video highlighting various public health professional pathways. She also supports response to COVID-19 school outbreaks and program planning initiatives. Both Jennifer and Gladys support advocacy and awareness in public health prevention programs and building leadership skills to strengthen their career goals.

The CA-PHC launched last year and received more than 900 applicants for 45 trainee slots. The [#PublicHERO Initiative](#) urges the Governor and Legislature to dedicate an additional \$24M to expand the program to an additional 300 trainees over 3 years.



1127 11th Street, Suite 806
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 327-7540