

# WE ARE PUBLIC HEALTH

BY CALIFORNIA'S LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

## PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS ADDRESS ALARMING DISPARITIES IN BIRTHING OUTCOMES FOR BLACK MOTHERS AND BABIES

Through the California Department of Public Health's Perinatal Equity Initiative (PEI), 11 county public health departments are partnering with community-based organizations to address disproportionate rates of infant and maternal mortality in Black communities, deploying targeted strategies and evidence-based practices that reduce racial health disparities in birthing outcomes for Black mothers and babies.

The Bay Area counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Solano recently announced their new [Deliver Birth Justice](#) public awareness campaign. San Diego County's [Black Legacy Now](#) campaign seeks to improve birth and maternal health outcomes for Black families by changing the systems that contribute to social injustices, economic disparities, and racial and health inequities. In San Joaquin County, the [Rally Around Our Sisters](#) campaign is working to build a healthier community for Black mothers and their babies.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention, about 700 women die nationwide each year during pregnancy or in the year after, with Black women nearly four times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes.

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## LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS DEBUNK COVID-19 MISINFORMATION

Misinformation and disinformation around COVID-19 vaccines and efficacy continue to concern local public health departments. San Diego became the first county in the state to declare misinformation a public health crisis. Responding to the public health threats posed by disinformation, San Diego county organized [a panel of medical experts](#) to debunk common myths and provide crucial facts directly to community members. Contra Costa county recently [took similar action](#) as a way to increase the public's awareness around the safety and efficacy of vaccines and increase vaccination rates to save lives.





## LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERS TARGET VACCINE HESITANCY

California's local public health departments are adding new tools to their COVID-19 mitigation tool chests, ramping up targeted intervention strategies to reach communities with higher levels of vaccine hesitancy alongside ongoing testing, contact tracing, and disease investigation efforts.

Riverside County Public Health recently [released a new campaign video](#) titled "Ask Your Doctor," to encourage community members to have informed conversations with their doctors around COVID-19 vaccines. In Yuba County, local vaccination data informed the public health department's decision-making that resulted in the [release of a video](#) to deliver crucial messaging around the importance of vaccines to Hmong community members.

## LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS WORK TO PREVENT OPIOID USE DISORDERS

California's local public health departments are on the frontlines in the local response to the opioid epidemic. Local public health departments have launched public awareness campaigns up and down the state to educate the public about the harms associated with opioid abuse. They also administer harm reduction programs, including distribution of the opioid overdose reversal drug, Naloxone, to help victims of overdose as well as needle exchange programs to reduce the spread of disease and illness.

The Fresno County Department of Public Health uses a multi-pronged approach to tackle opioid addiction through various public awareness initiatives. In addition to providing crucial information directly to the public, the department [released a video](#) on the County's Naloxone distribution program, [held a news briefing](#) with local media, and [acknowledges](#) substance use disorder is a new pandemic amid rising fentanyl-related overdose deaths.

The [Northern Sierra Opioid Safety Coalition](#), including Plumas, Lassen, Sierra, and Modoc counties is leading regional efforts on opioid use disorder prevention and harm reduction. The coalition's overdose prevention action and harm reduction teams promote safe prescribing and disposal practices, educate youth about the risks, increase access to medicated assisted treatment, clean syringes, and Naloxone. The coalition includes local public health, hospitals, criminal justice, law enforcement, local non-profit organizations and community members.

The Butte County Public Health Department [launched a social media campaign](#) around International Opioid Awareness Day in August. The County also recently launched a county-wide medication assisted treatment resource campaign throughout all 32 Butte County buses, transit shelters and on a digital billboard in Oroville.

## DATA & MITIGATION STRATEGIES GUIDE SAFE REOPENING

Local public health departments continue to issue data-informed guidance and/or requirements to protect their communities from COVID-19. In California's most populous county, Los Angeles [issued a new mandate](#) to require vaccination for everyone 12 and older as a condition of visiting indoor portions of bars, lounges, nightclubs, breweries, wineries, and distilleries. Starting November 1, visitors will be required to show identification with proof of vaccination or negative test for those 18 and older to attend outdoor mega events, including large sports arenas and theme parks.

A group of Bay Area counties recently [issued criteria](#) for how the region will collectively lift indoor masking requirements. The new criteria largely follows the California Department of Public Health's successful Blueprint for Reopening. In Butte County, the public health department is taking action in advance of the upcoming holiday season to [encourage residents to get vaccinated](#) and use extra precautions as they start gathering indoors in close proximity. With Fall holidays just around the corner, Sacramento County [issued guidance](#) to encourage safe activities for community members and guests.



## REVITALIZING PUBLIC HEALTH: LEVERAGING LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19

The County Health Executives Association of California held its annual conference earlier this month, bringing together local public health officials, staff, and national leaders to reflect on lessons learned from COVID-19 and an equity-centered path out of the public health crisis. The virtual conference featured plenary speakers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the California Department of Public Health, the California Department of Health Care Services, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) of California, and the University of California Berkeley School of Public Health. Full conference information and presentation materials are [available here](#).



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