

Increasing Equitable Access to COVID-19 and Influenza Vaccines

COMMUNITY CATALYST'S VACCINE EQUITY AND ACCESS PROGRAM



Community Catalyst's Vaccine Equity and Access Program (VEAP) increases equitable access to COVID-19 and influenza vaccines by supporting community-based organizations (CBOs) to engage communities of color, who are historically medically underserved.

While efforts are ongoing, VEAP works in partnership with 90 CBOs, including the three organizations showcased below who have overcome unique challenges in their community and successfully reached people with resources that give them the confidence to seek out vaccine opportunities and ultimately get vaccinated.

TOGETHER, WE HAVE:

- ✓ Reached over **26 million** people with vaccine information
- ✓ Vaccinated **140,000** people with the COVID-19 and influenza vaccines
- ✓ Established over **2,300** new vaccination sites or mobile/temporary clinics across the United States

CBO SPOTLIGHTS



Serving Karenni, Karen, Chin, Shan, Mon and Rahkin refugees, and Burma/Myanmar immigrants in Iowa

When COVID-19 hit, members of EMBARC's RISE AmeriCorps (Rebuild, Integrate, Serve, Empower) team stepped up in their local communities. RISE members provided information and navigation to thousands—helping them file for unemployment, get COVID-19 tests, obtain personal protective equipment, access food, and more. A key goal was to protect the community, and when COVID-19 vaccines became available, EMBARC acted quickly to provide education, information, and one-on-one case management, in addition to running vaccine clinics.

MOVING THEIR COMMUNITY TO ACTION BY:

Tapping Trusted Messengers:

Allaying concerns around the vaccine proved to be a significant barrier for the EMBARC team. By activating trusted community ambassadors/navigators on the ground to conduct door-to-door outreach, one-on-one phone calls, and handout individual flyers in different languages, they strengthened their credibility within the community.

Aligning Schedules with Providers:

Due to staffing shortages, providers' schedules were difficult to lock down - they were spread thin and working at a pop-up clinic was not realistic for their schedules. When coordinating, EMBARC understood that the host's site schedule is much more flexible than that of the provider's - by openly communicating with the provider on their availability they were able to put a procedure in

place that allowed them to secure the provider first and a host-site second, making the ability to stand up sites quickly more feasible.

Balancing COVID-19 vs. Flu Vaccine Access:

During flu season, COVID-19 and flu vaccines were encouraged to be given alongside each other - but while COVID-19 vaccines are free, the flu vaccine is not necessarily covered for all groups, which impacted populations who are uninsured. EMBARC used some of its own funds to buy vaccines and pay providers to staff and administer both flu shots and COVID-19 vaccines. If guidelines remain consistent, EMBARC plans to consider which partners are best suited to administer and deliver both shots at the same time to avoid confusion and ensure the community feels confidently protected.



Working to create opportunities and eliminate barriers to health equity for Coloradans with a primary focus on immigrants

As soon as the COVID-19 vaccine became available in Colorado, Center for Health Progress sprang into action to vaccinate their community. They worked with Caracoles, a group of women from immigrant and mixed status families, to help community members navigate multiple processes, understand the vaccine's efficacy, anticipate side effects, and even accompany them to get their shots.

MOVING THEIR COMMUNITY TO ACTION BY:

Engaging Community Members:

Caracoles, a group of women from immigrant and mixed status families, went through the vaccine process themselves and then went out in the community (at front doors, in stores, churches, restaurants, etc.) to have human conversations and meet community members. They spoke with individuals about their own experiences and hesitations on the vaccine (and why they changed their mind or sought out opportunities). Seeing themselves in the Caracoles eased anxiety and fears and ultimately made community members more comfortable to take the next step towards vaccination.

Providing Onsite Support:

Despite their interest in getting the vaccine, language barriers hindered community members from visiting clinics. Caracoles leaders encouraged individuals to fill out forms apart from where vaccines were being offered

and bring the paperwork with them as a next step to a host clinic. Here, they would meet one of the Caracoles who would walk them through the entire process. From being their interpreter, to scheduling their second shot - and even sitting with them for the 15 minutes after vaccination - they acted as an extension of their close circle and became a support group the community could rely on.

Reducing Intimidation Factors:

With FEMA or National Guard vehicles/representatives on site to administer the vaccine, community members feared their immigration status would come into question. Center for Health Progress partnered with these federal groups and the state health department to ensure that during certain days, these vehicles would not be on site so that people felt more comfortable walking in and registering for the vaccine. Coupling this approach with the onsite support of the Caracoles reduced fears and created a more welcoming environment for community members.



Providing community-based outreach, education, and comprehensive health screenings to thousands of at-risk populations in Georgia

Given TLC Global's focus on cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases, when coronavirus emerged, they aimed to educate the community not only about the virus, but about the linkage between diseases like obesity and diabetes to the severity of illness when contracting COVID-19 to encourage vaccinations.

MOVING THEIR COMMUNITY TO ACTION BY:

Surveying the Community:

With a multi-pronged approach including interviewing community members for filmed "COVID Conversations" as well as partnering with clinics to survey the community more broadly, TLC Global was able to a) better understand why their community was hesitant to get vaccinated and b) learn where they were getting their information. These insights were used to temper fears, develop content, and encourage vaccination opportunities.

Keeping Information Fresh:

With guidelines and new information circulating on COVID-19 daily, TLC Global ensured they were reaching their community with timely resources to combat misinformation. By using targeted Facebook posts, TLC Global reached members with relevant information multiple times a day. Part of their overall strategy included

refreshing content and posting it to a new landing page on their website, which housed a diverse range of resources as new information emerged. Beyond vaccine information, TLC Global shared general information (i.e. the difference between Delta and Omicron variants), which helped to establish them as a trusted source on the topic, offering the community more than just vaccine resources.

Partnering with Local Entities:

TLC Global leveraged local versus state-based organizations to help spread education and awareness. By partnering with education centers, universities, churches, local medical organizations, and others, they were able to share information efficiently to a vast network of partners. This allowed them to spread resources beyond their own members and through their local organization's social media channels, brochures, and other mediums.

With vaccination more urgent than ever, VEAP continues to work with CBOs across the nation to equip them with the resources needed to provide individuals and families with accurate, timely, and culturally appropriate information. Vaccine confidence building is an ongoing endeavor, but through collaborative efforts like VEAP, communities across the nation can begin to move towards a healthier future.

