

Centering Community Health Workers and Cultural Competence in the Federal Distribution of COVID-19 Rapid At-Home Tests

BACKGROUND

In response to the White House COVID-19 Response Team's launch of www.covidtests.gov, the National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW) developed and implemented a multi-level initiative to recruit, build skills, and provide access to resources, tools, and strategies for community health workers (CHWs) and members of community-based organizations (CBOs). NACHW disseminated information regarding www.covidtests.gov to its national network of CHWs and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) operating on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic in vulnerable and underserved communities, diverse in language, culture, ethnicity, and geography.

NACHW collected data for our recommendations through three different methods during our dissemination of covidtests.gov. We had a partner sign-up form with 7,015 sign-ups, daily orientation calls with 1,610 registrants, and a Capacity Assessment Survey on CHW and CBO Access to COVID Tests and Masks with 717 responses. The message through this data was clear, communities needed tests and masks, and CHWs and CBOs were ready to answer the call to facilitate those resources. One of those organizations was Día de la Mujer Latina and their call center.

[Día de la Mujer Latina](#) is a Latino community-based organization in Houston, Texas. DML's mission is to promote healthy behaviors within the underserved Latino community by offering a culturally and linguistically proficient education and Patient Navigation for follow-up services, facilitating early detection health screenings, providing culturally preventative care interventions and training programs for Promotores/Community Health Workers, promoting wellness and navigation with resource information.

• 630,000 test kits ordered by residents in high vulnerability zip codes

• 1.2 million website visitors

• A dedicated multilingual call center

• Resources in 5 languages

• 1,610 orientation registrants



Recommendations from Community Health Workers and Community Based Organizations to Improve COVID-19 Testing and Mask Distribution at the State and Federal Level

1. Establish a single, centralized coordinating body to develop partnerships, implement strategy and provide information about all available testing programs to increase access and accessibility to Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Community Health Workers (CHWs).
2. Share information about testing programs in plain language with clear actionable steps to engage with the programs, and available in multiple languages and reviewed for cultural competency.
3. Integrate the CHW and CBO expertise to design, implement, monitor, and improve COVID-19 testing and mask distribution programs. Programs should not be designed prior to requesting feedback and asking communities to alter their responses around them.
4. Leverage CBO and CHW community relationships, trust, language diversity and engagement strategies to quickly distribute thousands of tests and masks.
5. Fund CBOs and CHWs to supply their communities with tests and masks.
6. Enforce a data ecosystem that promotes equity-driven and community level decision-making.
7. Increase accountability for health equity outcomes and include community in the evaluation of public health programs.