



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

MM DD, 2020

Public Health issues statement in support of Latino community 'People who are contacted as part of Public Health investigations related to COVID-19 will not be asked about their documentation status'

Recent news articles have discussed the fact that Humboldt's Latino community has suffered disproportionately from COVID-19. This is true in California as a whole, and it is true in Humboldt County. According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Hispanics/Latinos make up 12 percent of the Humboldt County population but are approximately 40 percent of all confirmed COVID-19 cases. In California, 59 percent of confirmed cases and 47 percent of deaths are Hispanic/Latino, while representing 40 percent of the state's population, according to estimates based on U.S. Census Bureau data.

A paper from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration states that, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the reasons for these disparities among this group and other people of color include unfair differences in access to the things that keep people healthy. For example, this group is more likely to be employed in essential work settings, such as food service or agriculture, where telecommuting is not an option and they're more likely to be exposed to COVID-19. Access to health care may be limited due to lack of insurance or because they are unable to take time off from work or because the services are not provided in their preferred language. Housing is another factor for people who, for economic or cultural reasons, live in crowded conditions and with extended, intergenerational family members. This results in increased risk for exposure to COVID-19 and other underlying health problems.

For some immigrant communities, fear of deportation and language preference may be added layers of stress and barriers to seeking treatment. Racism and xenophobia on their own have enormous negative impacts on public health outcomes and fears of racist treatment and deportation compound that impact for people of color and immigrant communities.

Several laws are in place to help build trust for immigrant communities. California's Values Act or SB54, prohibits local and state agencies from cooperating with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding undocumented individuals

who have committed minor offenses. In addition to this state law, Humboldt County's sanctuary ordinance, established by the passing of Measure K in 2018, provides added security for undocumented residents in the county. In March, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' stated that seeking testing, treatment or prevention services for COVID-19 would not be used against immigrants in a public charge test. Nobody should be afraid to seek health care. Health care providers and other government agencies should not be sharing information with or otherwise coordinating with ICE, when serving that community.

Humboldt County Public Health provides services in both English and Spanish. Additionally, we want the community to know that people who are contacted as part of Public Health investigations related to COVID-19 will not be asked about their documentation status. During a health crisis such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, trust is critical for people to seek out the help they need including access to testing and health care. Humboldt County Public Health supports policies and practices that help promote trust and equity for all members of our community.

Together with community partners such as Centro del Pueblo, the Latino Community Providers' Network and the Humboldt County Office of Education, we are pleased to invite the community to a Spanish language town hall about COVID-19. This will be an opportunity to get informed about COVID-19, ask questions regarding schools, re-openings and how to stay healthy.

Join us via Zoom on Monday, Aug. 31, from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/92981380067?pwd=M3VqVDM1Q1VmRIMyYWR0MDM4cW1UZz09>

For community members seeking local information about COVID-19 in Spanish, please call the Joint Information Center at 707-441-5000.

Additional information and resources can be found at the CDPH website www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OHE/Pages/COVID-19-Get-Help.aspx and protectingimmigrantfamilies.org, a partnership of the National Immigration Law Center and the Center for Law and Social Policy.

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