



A Community-Led and Informed Collaborative Within Public Health Governance



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Background

“ I believe that trust is earned by example. You build trust by being in communities, and being honest and real... and [by] following up with what you're saying you will do. - SMC Resident ”

The community is wholly aware of the historical and current power imbalances reinforcing health inequities. This awareness requires a shift in the purpose of community engagement to support community power-building. To advance our commitment to health equity and improve health outcomes for all members in San Mateo County (SMC), the SMC Health division of Public Health, Policy, and Planning (PHPP) partnered with El Concilio of San Mateo to develop a Community Collaborative Model (CCM) to institutionalize a space for shared decision-making and power-sharing.

The San Mateo County Public Health Community Collaborative promotes health equity by building and sustaining a formal structure for collaboration and power-sharing between community, CBOs, and multi-sector partners. We aim to promote communication, build new partnerships, share resources, and build trust between residents and multi-sector partners to ensure priority populations are represented in decision-making.

Community Partners

El Concilio of San Mateo County is committed to increasing education, employment and access to quality of life services to underserved communities in San Mateo County.

Public Health, Policy and Planning protects the health of everyone who lives, works, learns and plays in San Mateo County by preventing the spread of communicable diseases, delivering targeted health care services, providing public health laboratory testing and building communities that make it easy to stay healthy.



Project Description

The CCM currently consists of CBO Representatives and PHPP employees and meets on a monthly basis since September 2023. These participants are co-designing a governance structure to ensure equitable responsibilities across groups and prioritize goals with a focus on community needs. To support the identified goals, the CCM will conduct outreach to priority equity populations across San Mateo County to recruit community members to join the collaborative and participate in shared decision-making. Participant evaluation of trust and power-building within this structure will be completed by August 2024.

The CCM is currently collaborating with PHPP to guide the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CCM provides community feedback and advice on best practices to ensure that the CHIP's objectives and actions are equitable.

Expected Outcomes

An overarching goal of the CCM is to strengthen partnerships to build community trust. Our intended outcomes are that SMC residents will feel they are participating in shared decision-making processes and feel that they have power to make an impact. They will also feel a greater sense of trust in PHPP and build a stronger understanding of how PHPP functions.

“ [PHPP needs to] work with trusted community partners to determine needs, challenges, and barriers, especially for hard to reach populations- SMC Resident ”



Community Listening Session Hosted by ALAS



Community Listening Session Hosted by El Concilio



Community Collaborative Model Workgroup

Lessons Learned

Transparency plays a crucial role in building trust with the community. Often, the community does not distinguish between different San Mateo County departments and divisions and expects staff to address all aspects of an institution. To navigate this effectively it was important that the community convening partner had strong roots in the community to create the bridge between PHPP and the community. In this partnership we have adopted many lessons and best practices shared during the Health Equity Ambassador program, including utilizing a stakeholder map to identify the priority equity populations to engage in the CCM.

Recommendations

Community input is valuable and should be reflected in systemic change within governmental institutions. This model is intended to demonstrate and practice an equitable space for future ongoing decision-making process that have impact beyond PHPP, and is inclusive of other departments across SMC Health and other County institutions whose work directly or indirectly impacts the SMC community. This structure can serve as bridge between government, community, and academia. It will provide a strong foundation for future community led research in partnership with Stanford and other institutions. As priorities are identified, there will be a need for Stanford experts to support activities such as identifying validated tools to measure trust and power-sharing.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the community partners without whom this work would not be possible. We would also like to thank the ongoing support from the leadership of Public Health, Policy, and Planning (PHPP) and El Concilio. Funding provided by the National Health Institute's Clinical and Translational Science Award through Stanford Medicine Office of Community Engagement and Stanford Cancer Institute Office of Cancer Health Equity

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