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Public Health Selects 10 Communities for Reimagined Public Health Workforce



The COVID-19 pandemic prompted significant changes to LA County’s public health infrastructure. Like public health departments around the world, LA County Public Health (Public Health) quickly ramped up services to prevent COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. In the fall of 2020, Public Health established the Community Health Worker Outreach Initiative (CHWOI) and contracted with community-based organizations (CBOs) to mobilize promotores, health outreach workers, advocates, and ambassadors. These community health workers are trusted messengers, often living in the same neighborhoods they conduct outreach in, implementing [one of the most effective communication programs](#) in Public Health’s response to COVID-19.

Although CHWOI was designed to address COVID-19, Public Health leaders and partners recognized the model’s potential to address other health burdens. In October of 2022, Public Health organized a workgroup with community partners to explore what a comprehensive, community-based public health model could look like. Public Health collaborated with the workgroup to develop the Community Public Health Teams (CPHTs) framework.

Reimagined, Multi-Disciplinary Teams

CPHT is designed to go beyond mobilizing CBOs. It builds a formal, 5-year partnership between a CBO, a health care partner, and a dedicated Public Health staff. These multi-disciplinary teams conduct annual home visits to a minimum 8,000 households, assess their health needs and connect them to care. These teams also work at the community level, co-creating community action plans with residents to identify and address their community’s biggest concerns.

This is a new approach to public health. These formal partnerships extend the public health workforce and infrastructure for community-based care. They can build relationships with households and empower communities to define and address the health priorities that matter to them. Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd, Director of Public Health, describes this pilot project as an intervention on two levels, “We’ve learned that public health activities benefit from a different kind of engagement. This project is designed to do two things: 1) meet people where they’re at by visiting their homes and 2) lift up the conditions in these communities that contribute to poorer health outcomes.”

Turning Ideas into Reality

With an established framework for the CPHT pilot project, LA County Supervisors approved Rising Communities as a third-party administrator, leveraging funding from the CDC’s Strengthening U.S. Public Health Infrastructure, Workforce, and Data Systems Grant. Rising Communities released a Request for Proposals in the summer of 2023 and convened a proposal review committee to select and fund 10 teams.