




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Stephanie Hayden, Director 

DATE: June 29, 2020

SUBJECT: Addressing equity during the COVID-19 response - Austin Public Health

This memorandum is a summary of all actions taken by city staff and partners to address equity during this response. Upon activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Austin Public Health established a social services branch to ensure the protection of community health factors. The work of the Social Services Branch focuses on addressing the needs of all priority populations with a focus on equity. The following are a few highlights of areas the City has partnered with the community to address COVID-19 in the LatinX community.

Communication

Marion Sanchez, Community Engagement Manager, is serving as the staff liaison for the Latinx community. The Department is appreciative of her expertise, as well as her willingness to step into this role. She served as the lead staff from the Communications and Public Information Office on the planning of the June 13 Latinx Facebook Live event, the first City of Austin hosted event conducted in Spanish. The event allowed Austin's Spanish speaking community to engage with health and community leaders across the City and County to receive information about COVID-19, and community resources, as well as share concerns. Initial analytics indicate an overall positive response to the event, reaching over 50,000 and generating 847 interactions.

The Joint Information System (JIS) team marketing plan includes focused efforts to reach the LatinX community. The plan seeks to leverage Spanish speaking TV, Radio, print media, and social media, along with in-person outreach and localized distribution of printed materials.

Focused efforts are as follows:

- City of Austin COVID-19 website is translated in Spanish and contains Spanish translations of downloadable resources
- Spanish Public Service Announcements (PSA) highlighting essential prevention methods and available resources
- Univisión town hall focused on working safely at construction sites
- Simulcasting media availabilities and press conferences in Spanish on ATXN3 or including a Spanish Speaking Health professional in media events



- Interviews with Spanish speaking physicians
- In partnership with the Education and Community Preparedness cabinet, sent informational mailers in English and Spanish to about 50,000 households in the Eastern Crescent
- Dissemination of printed materials in English and Spanish to the nonprofit and business communities
- Coordination with interpreters at 311 to assist callers with completing forms and accessing resources

Focused Outreach

The Small and Minority Business Resource (SMBR) department has an ongoing communication effort that has reached over 8,400 vendors to date. The staff will continue to provide emails, testing information, guidelines for health, including “Stay home if you are sick” to vendors. Staff sent 560 certified mail to vendors and their primes. Staff also reached out to suppliers to ask them to post COVID-19 posters and testing site information in their stores. They also emailed construction job site flyers and testing information to ten local suppliers and two local landfills. Austin Public Health (APH) and Economic Development (EDD) departments leveraged vendor relationships by providing information to vendors that they could share with their clients. Several provided education via case management sessions and phone sessions, as well as using their social media platforms to provide information to their clients and making printed material available to clients as they accessed services at locations throughout the City and County. APH continues to expand its reach by leveraging relationships with community and faith-based leaders, as well as other stakeholders and partners. These partners assist by passing out flyers that contain prevention messaging, as well as information about resources and free testing options.

Community Engagement

City staff met with LatinX community partners to review a list of recommendations and expectations provided to the Mayor and City Manager. APH recently offered a status update on the recommendations to our Latinx partners for review. In response to feedback from Mayor and Council, as well as our Latinx community, staff have worked on substantial updates to the initial plan. The new document was created by the Priority Populations Task Force, comprised of APH staff that have been engaging with communities on the ground during the response. A team of City staff have presented a draft of the plan to our partners UT/Dell Med and CommUnity Care for initial feedback and review. The Department is clear that our partners in the LatinX community must have the opportunity to review and inform the plan before finalization.

Staff have met with leaders from several organizations serving the LatinX community to request continued support for response and planning efforts. The Department has identified three partner organizations serving residents in 78741, 78744, and 78752 who have been active during the



pandemic to work with APH as we move forward. These partners will be consulted and have agreed to work with the Department on planning and implementation.

Service Delivery

The COVID-19 dashboard is updated daily to provide the community with data on testing rates, hospitalization, and ventilator use. This data drives all strategic planning and program implementation.

- Testing and contact tracing services
 - Prioritization of Spanish translations
 - 41% of the current staffing at the APH Department Center dedicated to epidemiological response and nurse line services are bilingual
 - Spanish interpretation available for nurse line services
 - Walk-up testing pilot for Latinx community at Sacred Heart Catholic Church
 - Additional testing sites at Dove Springs, Givens, and in Rundberg neighborhood to go live the week of July 6, 2020
 - Multilingual nurse line services to assist with test registration and follow-up

- Resources and Support
 - 80% of the clients receiving RISE funding identify as Hispanic
 - 18% of homeless individuals staying in ProLodges identify as Hispanic/Latino
 - 48% of clients in Isolation Facilities identify as Hispanic/Latino
 - Provision of cloth masks, hand sanitizer and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Go Austin, Vamos Austin, Austin Voices, and other agencies serving the Latinx community

Austin Public Health – Health Equity Unit

Since 2008, Austin Public Health has been working to eliminate disparities in communities of color concerning chronic disease and illness. In 2013, the City of Austin conducted a study on the quality of life for Austin’s Hispanic /Latino residents. The following link connects to the page on the City website that contains the report and information about the City’s efforts to support Quality of Life Outcomes for the Latinx community.

https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/City_Manager/HispanicReport-ver_6-0901_13.pdf

The Health Equity Unit is the tactical response to health disparities noted in the report. In addition to health fairs, health education, and health motion events, the Unit provides free health screenings to the community.



Below is a 3-year snapshot of performance on the percentage of clients that received screening services from the Health Equity Unit by race and ethnicity:

	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20 (as of Mar 13)
Latinx	37%	38%	35%
Black	32%	36%	35%
White	9%	10%	9%
Asian	19%	14%	14%
Other	3%	2%	7%

Ultimately the health of our residents in Austin is our number one priority. We will continue to refine our efforts and work very closely with the community because we cannot do this work alone. We want to reach the folks that need our help the most. That will ultimately make our entire City and County stronger.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly at Stephanie.Hayden@austintexas.gov or 512-972-5010.

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
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