A SNAPSHOT OF NACCHO’S FORCES OF CHANGE SURVEY | THE COVID-19 EDITION

From the Front Line of Public Health Response

Responding to COVID-19: The Burden on Local Health Departments (LHDs)

Following years of chronic under-resourcing, the pandemic stretched the local public health infrastructure to its limits, with LHDs spending already strained financial and staffing capacities to respond.

- **$3.25B**: Total spent by LHDs on 2020 response efforts
- **16%**: Cost of 2020 response efforts proportionate to total 2019 LHD spending
- **53.6K**: Employees hired by LHDs for 2020 response efforts
- **34%**: Staffing for 2020 response efforts proportionate to total 2019 LHD workforce

Hindering Population Health: The Impacts of Response on Local Capacity

To reallocate capacity for the critical frontline response, LHDs suspended foundational public health services, further exacerbating health inequities and existing community epidemics.

- **82%**: Percent of LHDs reducing their service provision
  - Chronic disease prevention: 76%
  - Substance use prevention: 65%
  - Maternal & child health: 60%
- **84%**: Percent of LHDs facing barriers to robust response
  - Limited LHD capacity
  - Issues addressing inequities during contact tracing
  - Lack of recovery plan in place

Paving the Road Forward: The Next Steps for Community Recovery & Resilience

LHDs need long-term resource investments expanding capacity for preparedness planning, health equity, and community recovery to bolster response to future public health emergencies.

- **1**: Galvanize support for local public health funding & staffing
- **2**: Target response efforts to address health inequities
- **3**: Prioritize pandemic & community recovery planning

In October 2020, NACCHO administered the Forces of Change survey to assess changes in LHD capacity driven by the pandemic. A total of 583 LHDs completed a set of core questions, and 237 completed an additional module—24% and 26% response rates, respectively. Funding was provided by RWJF and the CDC (cooperative agreement 5 NU38OT000306-04-00).

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