



Building Connections: In-Person Convening of Local Health Departments to Inform Adult Immunization Priorities

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NACCHOSM
National Association of County & City Health Officials

Project Background:

In 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched the Partnering for Vaccine Equity (P4VE) program to promote vaccine equity among racial and ethnic minority groups. The program supports national, state, local, and community-based organizations (CBOs) with access to a learning community, resource repository, data assistance, and national communications. The P4VE project further supports the need for a sustainable adult immunization program at the federal level. Aspects of this project have assisted CDC in building and proposing core elements for a Vaccines for Adults (VFA) program.

Through P4VE, NACCHO has funded local health departments (LHDs) nationwide to enhance COVID-19 and influenza vaccination efforts among ethnic minority adults. NACCHO has worked with 40 health departments across 21 states and the District of Columbia, distributing over \$5 million in support.

P4VE Summit Overview:

NACCHO funded diverse LHDs through this project, highlighting the need for a convening to unite participants. The P4VE Summit was organized to facilitate knowledge exchange, create a collective statement, and build professional connections.

The P4VE Summit held May 7-8, 2024, in Washington, D.C., brought together LHDs to share themes, lessons, and outcomes to guide future adult immunization programs. Selected through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Institute for Vaccine Safety facilitated the convening, promoting peer sharing, networking, and engagement.

The P4VE Summit produced a collaborative document, *Roadmap for Progress: Key Focus Areas in Adult Immunization* (see Appendix), designed to guide leaders and stakeholders in future efforts to improve adult immunization and vaccine equity. This concise roadmap was developed collaboratively by participating LHDs and facilitators, reflecting

the shared insights and priorities of all attendees. In addition to serving as a practical resource for shaping policies, building sustainable programs, and advancing equity, the P4VE Summit also provided a platform for comparing strategies, building connections, and gaining insights into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by LHDs. The document offers a clear, actionable framework for driving impactful change in the field.

Key Themes:

As the P4VE Summit progressed, participants engaged in meaningful discussions, leading to a consensus on several key themes.

Challenges of Politicization and Restrictions in Public Health

Participants expressed concerns about the politicization of public health, with experiences varying by jurisdiction. While some work in supportive areas, others face challenges like budget cuts, eroded public trust, high staff turnover, and political restrictions, including bans on referencing COVID-19, labeling services as “free,” and restrictive immigration laws. Internal departmental politics also pose challenges for some jurisdictions.

Building and Sustaining Community Trust

Unique partnerships significantly extended outreach into specific communities, and participants universally agreed on their importance for equitable vaccine access. LHDs focused on building connections with diverse groups, including LGBTQ and immigrant communities, churches, relief organizations, and local businesses. However, sustaining these partnerships remains a concern without ongoing funding or resources.

The Importance of Strategic Partnerships

Building community trust is essential yet possesses several challenges due to the spread of mis and disinformation. Many P4VE projects focused on fostering trust by creating programs that increased intersections between local public health and community partners.

Expanding Community-Based Outreach

Direct community engagement—through mobile clinics, door-to-door visits, and local events—has proven highly effective. Mobile units, though costly and challenging to maintain alone, are widely considered a best practice, with some programs partnering with local services to share costs and expand outreach.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) also play a vital role in connecting with residents. As members of the communities they serve, CHWs provide a trusted link to public health resources, helping LHDs extend their reach and maximize resources.

Sustainability of Incentives

Incentives effectively encouraged participation and healthy behaviors, but participants expressed concern about sustaining engagement once incentives are no longer available. This highlights the importance of developing engagement methods that remain effective without external incentives.

The Importance of Culturally Relevant, Accessible Outreach

Providing linguistically appropriate and culturally relevant materials is essential, with attention to diverse cultural backgrounds within language groups.

Data-Driven Storytelling for Advocacy

Collecting and presenting data in a compelling way is crucial for gaining support from legislators and stakeholders, helping to advocate for healthy communities and informed decision-making.

Expansive and Relational Partnerships

Participants emphasized the importance of building broad and meaningful partnerships with various CBOs like food banks, hospitals, libraries, farmers markets, fraternities, sororities, Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) programs, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) supporting immigrants and refugees. Some LHDs also collaborated with academic institutions, hospitals, and pharmacies for data collection and analysis.

Furthermore, shifting from a transactional approach (“shots in arms”) to a relational approach fosters stronger, long-term connections with CBOs and the public, where community members’ first encounters with public health are not solely during times of need. Although this shift requires time and resources, it is expected to yield long-term benefits.

The Power of Transparent and Authentic Communication

Effective communication hinges on transparency, authenticity, and humility. Many leaders emphasized the importance of approaching messaging as a conversation rather than a proclamation, as credibility is strengthened when organizations are open about what is known and unknown. In addition to focusing on vaccine equity, P4VE leaders recognized the broader value of their relationship-building efforts, noting that many of these strategies can be applied to initiatives beyond immunization. Acknowledging the reality of vaccine fatigue, they found that addressing a variety of topics—before pivoting to vaccine-related discussions—helps engage communities in a more natural dialogue, fostering trust and deeper connections.

Conclusion

The convening of LHDs across the P4VE project portfolio proved to be a valuable endeavor. It facilitated relationship-building and information exchange, strengthening LHDs’ capacity to address vaccine uptake and equity in their communities. NACCHO created an environment that encouraged sharing project learnings and fostering connections across sites.

NACCHO thanks the LHDs for their enthusiastic participation and engagement with facilitators at this convening. We also appreciate the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health’s Institute for Vaccine Safety for creating an open environment for feedback and learning, and for capturing key themes and insights from LHDs. The success of this event was driven by these collaborative efforts.

Appendix

Roadmap for Progress: Key Focus Areas in Adult Immunization

Introduction

The National Association of County and City Health Officials' (NACCHO) mission is to improve the health of communities by strengthening and advocating for the nation's nearly 3,300 local health departments (LHDs). NACCHO's vision is to improve the public health system at the local level to create conditions for optimal health, equity, and security for all people.

In recent years, NACCHO has convened meetings with LHD partners to advance adult immunization. These sessions build upon prior recommendations across four key themes: Policy, Data & Reporting, Access, and Communication. Each theme prioritizes equity and partnerships to facilitate the implementation of recommendations and achieve equitable access to, and uptake of, vaccines.

With the addition of Investment, the outlined focus areas aim to guide NACCHO's advocacy and offer a roadmap for promoting increased adult vaccination at national, state, and local levels. NACCHO recognizes that achieving these critical goals demands substantial effort and collaboration across all levels, necessitating a strategic approach to ensure gradual changes over time.

Improve the Adult Immunization Infrastructure	
Policy	<p>Develop a Vaccines for All Program modeled after the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. Provide fair market reimbursement and incentives (relevant to intended populations) and require participation in data and reporting systems. (national)</p>
Utilize Data to Enhance Immunization Strategies	
Data & Reporting	<p>Make Immunization Information Systems (IIS) robust. Guarantee interoperability across data tools, sources, and jurisdictions (e.g., registries, electronic health records, and vaccine records) and improve data entry training. (state, national)</p>
	<p>Require providers to use IIS. (state, national)</p>
	<p>Increase access to and usage of data to determine the efficacy of outreach, education, and vaccination strategies and improve equity. (local, state, national)</p>
Implement Collective Immunization Strategies	
Access	<p>Engage with providers to ensure that they provide information and access to vaccination and improve linkage to care. (local, state)</p>
	<p>Prioritize partnerships with those who support and provide wrap-around services at the local level. Systematically assess and address community and individual needs, emphasizing immunization as a part of a holistic approach to wellness and health equity. (local, state)</p>
	<p>Make it easy, not hard. Assess and address the social and political upstream barriers, such as transportation, language, literacy, technology, building trust, cost, and policy for point-of-service codes. (local, state, national)</p>
Leverage Credible and Trustworthy Communication	
Communication	<p>Create and distribute messaging through trusted communication channels. Collaborate with partners to create and disseminate evidence-based, research-informed messages to build credibility with those you serve. (local, state, national)</p>
Commit to the Long-Term Vision	
Investment	<p>Cultivate a strong and sustainable public health workforce and infrastructure. Public health effectiveness relies on the quality and diversity of its workforce. Grow and maintain strong networking opportunities, facilitate continuous learning, provide adequate support, and ensure fair compensation for professionals in the field. (local, state, national)</p>
	<p>Prioritize relationship building. Public health requires mutual trust and engagement among communities and public health entities. Build trust by investing time and resources and embracing community and individual needs, values, priorities, and experiences in health decision-making. (local, state, national)</p>