

MONTEREY COUNTY
2020 CSAC Challenge Award Entry
Issue Area: Disaster/Emergency Response & Management
Population: Suburban County Category

Monterey County – COVID-19 Pandemic Disparate Impact Report: Strategies for Addressing the Disparate Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Communities of Color in Monterey County

OVERVIEW: Monterey County’s *COVID-19 Pandemic Disparate Impact Report* informed the Board of Supervisors and public of the pandemic’s impact and action plans to address racial disparities.

CHALLENGE: Of Monterey County’s 434,000 residents, 59% identify as Latinx and 25% are Limited English Proficient (LEP)¹, predominantly Spanish speakers and of indigenous languages from the Oaxacan region of Mexico, such as Mixteco, Triqui, Chatino, and Zapoteco. As of July 31, 2020 Monterey County reported 4,697 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Race and ethnicity information were available for 3,670 of those cases (78%). Among those cases, 93% self-identified as Latinx. Latinx residents experienced significantly higher rates of COVID-19 morbidity (1,255.4 per 100,000), severe illness (85% of hospitalizations) and mortalities than other racial and ethnic groups in Monterey County.

SOLUTION: In 2016, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Governing for Racial Equity Initiative (GRE). The initiative began with a learning experience for a cross-sector team of County leaders, deepening their understanding of how risk factors and underlying conditions in Communities of Color are a result of institutional and systemic racism hereby increasing the disparities and perpetuating racial inequities in many complex social issues. Strategies outlined in the *COVID-19 Pandemic Disparate Impact Report* incorporate GRE principles bringing change to local policies, legislative advocacy support and resource the strategies, and shifts in practices within County departments – all aimed at addressing the underlying conditions that are rampant in Communities of Color, most specifically in the Latinx community. Advancing racial equity in county health systems, protections for frontline workers, public assistance provisions to meet basic needs and housing accessibility will reap benefits for all, regardless of race or ethnicity.

¹ A limited English proficient individual does not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

INNOVATION: The *COVID-19 Pandemic Disparate Impact Report: Strategies for Addressing the Disparate Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Communities of Color in Monterey County* contains comprehensive strategies that can be implemented as a model or tailored to meet the specific needs of each community. The report outlines strategies for a holistic approach to improve the social determinants of health in the following areas: **HEALTH:** Increase and expand testing accessibility in communities with low testing rates by building capacity in partnership with local primary care providers; increase and expand case investigations and contact tracing using methods that incorporate cultural sensitivity and humility and are linguistically appropriate.; **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FOR BASIC NEEDS:** Increase accessibility by modifying outreach methods including the use of technology for virtual connections to address food insecurity.; **HOUSING:** Address the need for emergency alternative housing for COVID-19 impacted residents and strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing.; **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Implement strategies to address income inequities, classify frontline workers as ‘essential’ for additional benefits, and support small business and social enterprises with access to funding for sustainability.; **JUSTICE SYSTEM:** Strategies to help flatten the curve and reduce the incarcerated population include adopting a local temporary bail schedule, ensure health protections for incarcerated and workforce populations, and collaboration between the District Attorney and Public Defender Offices to resolve cases removing defendants from custody.; **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Create opportunities for community resident leaders and grassroots organizations to provide input and influence the development and implementation of strategies to address the disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESULTS: The collaboration among County departments that will lead the implementation of strategies proposed in the report will ensure the coordinated effort’s success in reducing disparities.

REPLICABILITY: The framework of the report can be tailored to fit the needs of any County facing similar racial disparities as a result of a history of existing underlying conditions.

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OPTIONAL SUBMISSION:
[COVID-19 Pandemic Disparate Impact Report](#)
[Disparate Impact Report Presentation PPT](#)