



Supporting COVID-19 Vaccination in Hispanic and Latino Communities

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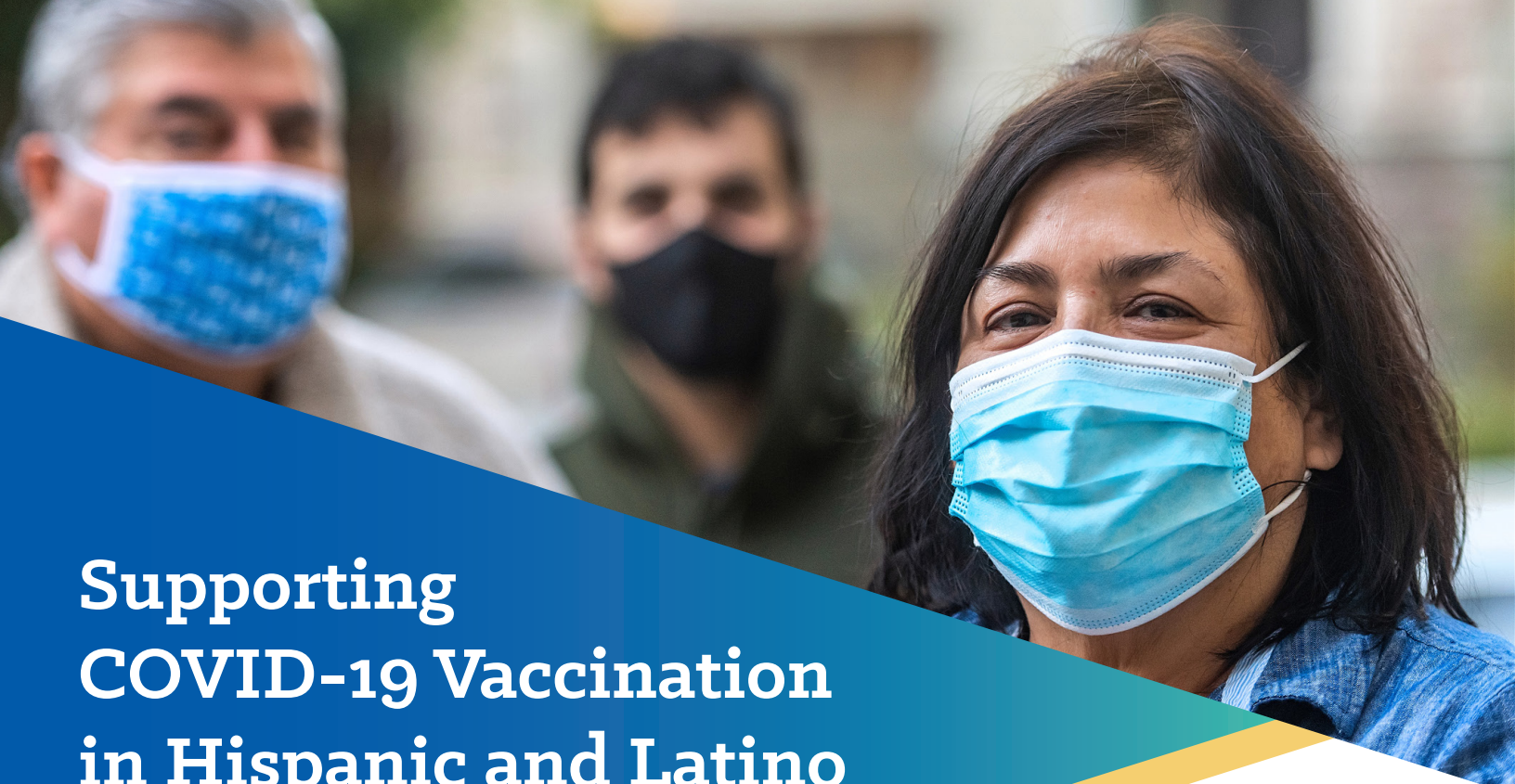
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Supporting COVID-19 Vaccination in Hispanic and Latino Communities

Across the country, Hispanic and Latino community-based organizations, local leaders and health workers have been collaborating on innovative, culturally congruent solutions to increase rates of COVID-19 vaccination. As a result, **Hispanic and Latino populations are expressing increasing desire to get vaccinated,¹ and disparities in vaccination rates are narrowing.²**

In some states, the rate of vaccination among Hispanics and Latinos is higher than among non-Hispanic whites.³

This is in large part due to the continued outreach and engagement of *promotores de salud* (community health workers), **community health centers** and other health and human service advocates in local Hispanic and Latino communities.

Cities and their partners have the opportunity to continue building on this momentum. This guide—a collaborative effort of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, the National League of Cities and NLC Hispanic Elected Local Officials—recommends strategies for sharing information and increasing access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Outreach in Hispanic and Latino communities remains an urgent priority. Here's why:

- ◆ Half of Hispanics and Latinos report that someone close to them has been hospitalized or died from COVID-19.⁴
- ◆ The rate of COVID-19-associated hospitalizations is 2.8 times higher for Hispanics and Latinos than non-Hispanic whites.⁵
- ◆ More than 175,000 children in the U.S. have lost a parent or grandparent to COVID-19. Hispanic and Latino children are almost twice as likely as white children to experience this loss.⁶
- ◆ Hispanics and Latinos are overrepresented in essential jobs (CDC defines essential workers as health care personnel and employees in other essential workplaces, e.g., first responders and grocery store workers, those in food manufacturing and agriculture, and others⁷; 64% of the essential workforce is Hispanic or Latino⁸), which often require working on site and in close proximity to others.⁹ This essential work includes farming, warehouse and supermarket labor. These positions—which are important components of our local economies—create a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19.¹⁰
- ◆ Misinformation is prevalent—and is spreading—on Spanish radio and social media pages.

City leaders and staff can be powerful partners by asking local organizations what they need, collaborating on shared approaches to increase vaccination, fighting misinformation and sharing facts.





**Support and
Partner with Local
Organizations, Community
Health Centers and
Trusted Leaders.**

Trust is key in increasing vaccination among Hispanic and Latino populations. Due in part to a history of abuses and ongoing inequitable treatment, almost 50% of unvaccinated Hispanics and Latinos are concerned that they won't be able to get the vaccine from a provider they trust. That number increases to 62% among uninsured Hispanics and Latinos.¹¹

Local groups and leaders—including churches, community-based organizations, community health centers, community media and others—understand what Hispanic and Latino populations need. They are trusted and can connect people to information and services.

Cities can support these groups' efforts, beginning with **asking what they need** and **listening** to what they say. When possible, cities might:

- ◆ **Offer funding or connect organizations to funding sources.** Some local groups may not be able to access state or county funding. City leaders can re-grant and contract out federal funds to local organizations.
- ◆ **Offer staff support and connections to other programs and resources.** For example, city leaders can contract with partners and offer mobile vaccination clinics. Local community groups can help determine dates, times and locations for the clinics and conduct outreach to get people there.
- ◆ **Share information through city channels**—for example, through churches, city libraries, community centers, parks, health centers, hospitals and more.
- ◆ **Provide data and information** to help local groups determine where there are high rates of unvaccinated community members, so they can better align their resources and outreach.

Keep in mind that community-based organizations receive many requests, so be sure to support their needs, compensate them for their time and expertise—or at least share costs and tasks—and create a mutually beneficial relationship. If there were glitches in previous vaccination efforts, acknowledge and address them. This helps build relationships of trust.

Here are some potential partners to explore if you aren't connected already:

- ◆ **Community health workers** and ***promotores de salud*** connect community members to health and social services. They are often a trusted member of the community they serve and have a deep understanding of it.¹² *Promotores de salud*, also known as *promotores*, are Spanish-speaking community health workers who focus on underserved Hispanic communities.¹³
- ◆ **Community health centers** provide primary and preventive services to populations with limited access to health care. They care for 16 million people at more than 6,000 locations across the nation. Their services reach communities and populations that have been underserved, including 60% serving Hispanic and Latino, African American or Native American populations. Seventy-one percent of those who receive services are below the federal poverty line, 42% are uninsured, and 35% are enrolled in Medicaid or SCHIP.¹⁴
- ◆ **Hispanic- and Latino-serving community-based organizations** address a variety of community needs and have earned the trust and built relationships with the people they serve.
- ◆ **Churches and faith-based organizations** can share COVID-19 vaccine resources in homilies, sermons, and bulletin inserts, and help host mobile vaccination clinics on-site.
- ◆ As vaccines become available for children, **school nurses and before/after school providers** may be key in reaching families, especially those who might not have insurance or access to pediatricians.
- ◆ **Local Spanish-language media, such as newspapers, radio, TV and social media**, can share facts, information about how to get vaccinated, and stories from people about why they got vaccinated and what it was like.
- ◆ **Local Hispanic or Latino chambers of commerce** can encourage business owners to support vaccination for their employees and share information with their customers.



Understand and Address Specific Challenges

Challenge: Language and Literacy Barriers



Spanish-language information and resources about COVID-19 vaccines can be limited, and it can be even harder to find information in languages spoken by Indigenous people from Central and Latin America.¹⁵ These language and literacy challenges present barriers to vaccination when information, forms, and requests for appointment are not available in other languages.

What Cities Can Do:

Offer culturally congruent information in Spanish and other languages.

City leaders can **download and share Spanish language resources** created by trusted organizations. (See the [resources section](#) for useful downloadable materials.) To support people who do not speak English. Using materials with illustrations and infographics is a good way to share important information.

Consider **partnering with local organizations providing Spanish language information** and support, including community health centers, community-based organizations, local public health departments, churches and others. Cities can help disseminate materials and information, provide funding where possible to support further outreach and refer residents to vaccination services.

Cities may increase their own language capacity by **engaging qualified Spanish language interpreters to review materials and content** that the city develops regarding COVID-19 vaccines, ensuring it is accurately translated and culturally congruent.

Cities may also work with partners to **ensure Spanish-speaking staff are available at vaccination sites**, and to **set up bilingual or multilingual telephone hotlines** to address questions, increase awareness of COVID-19 vaccines and assist with scheduling appointments.

Challenge:

Fear of Losing Wages or Job due to Missed Work



Concerns about missing work for a vaccination appointment—and for any side effects—can be a barrier, especially for essential workers. Hourly workers risk losing pay and could even lose their job for missing work. Sixty-four percent of unvaccinated Hispanic and Latino adults report they are very or somewhat concerned that side effects of the vaccine will make them miss work.¹⁶

Workers in rural areas have the added burden of travel considerations since the nearest health clinic or pharmacy can be many miles away.

What Cities Can Do:

Offer incentives.

City leaders can use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to **provide individual vaccine incentives**.¹⁷ Incentives can help cover lost wages and travel expenses, which makes the choice to get vaccinated easier. Local leaders can contact the White House Office of COVID Response (IGA46@WHO.eop.gov) and the U.S. Department of the Treasury (SLFRP@treasury.gov) for information.¹⁸

Consider **providing a meal** or holding a cookout for those who get vaccinated, as **San Joaquin County** did in California. In some cases, knowing food is available can be an incentive for individuals and families.

Encourage businesses to offer paid time off.

Employers prioritize retaining workers and helping them stay productive. Helping workers get vaccinated and stay healthy may be a motivating factor for offering paid time off—especially for businesses that rely on essential workers, who are in high demand and short supply.

Cities can engage their network of local employers and their local chambers of commerce to **encourage businesses to offer paid time off** to their employees for vaccination appointments (for themselves and their children), or to **host on-site vaccination clinics for employees**.

Many company policies have shifted rapidly during the pandemic and those changes sometimes do not get communicated effectively to all employees. Encourage employers to fully communicate companywide information and updates to policies on testing protocols and time off for vaccinations or testing.

The [Health Action Alliance](#) offers guidance on vaccines, incentives and other details for employers of all sizes, including [cities and other public sector employers, small businesses](#) and more.

Offer vaccination appointments outside of the workday and at consistent times.

Work with health organizations and other community stakeholders to encourage **offering evening and weekend hours at vaccination sites** so people don't have to take time off work to get vaccinated. Consider offering vaccination clinics at the same time and same place every week, so community members can rely on and easily share information about how to get vaccinated, removing the burden of searching for dates, times and locations.

Text messaging can be an effective way to reach community members. Cities that have text communication with residents can incorporate information—in English and Spanish—about vaccination clinic locations and hours.

Challenge: Misinformation and Lack of Information



The Latino Anti-Disinformation Lab recently reported that nearly 40% of Hispanic and Latino survey respondents said they have seen material or information that makes them think the COVID-19 vaccine is not safe or effective, and 78% believe COVID-19 misinformation is a very serious or somewhat serious problem.¹⁹

Many Hispanics and Latinos have received inaccurate or harmful information about the vaccine on Facebook (53%) and messaging apps (43%) such as WhatsApp, WeChat and Telegram.²⁰ This is particularly concerning as Hispanics are 56% more likely to use social media as the primary source of information on COVID-19, compared with non-Hispanics.^{21,22}

What Cities Can Do:

Engage community health centers and other trusted partners.

Community health centers, local public health departments, and Hispanic- and Latino-serving community-based organizations are trusted sources of health information and health care for many Hispanic and Latino communities. Throughout the pandemic, they have been helping underserved populations get the information and services they need—including vaccines—to stay safe and healthy. City leaders can **offer support, provide fact-based updates and information on vaccinations, and provide additional resources** to expand their ability to counter misinformation.

Rely on trusted messengers.

Reliable and trusted health care providers and experts from the community can share science-based information and help break the cycle of misinformation. Some of the most trusted messengers to engage include:

- ◆ **Health care professionals.** People who identify as Hispanic or Latino find doctors (66%) and community health centers (54%) extremely trustworthy sources for health information.²³ City leaders can invite health professionals from community health centers, local public health departments and other trusted community-based organizations to speak at city events and incorporate statements or quotes from them in city materials.

- ◆ **Promotores de salud.** City leaders can support outreach by community health workers and *promotores*, helping them provide information through city libraries, community centers, parks, health centers, hospitals, churches and more.
- ◆ **Friends, family and neighbors.** Many people feel more comfortable getting vaccinated when someone they know or trust shares their vaccination experience. City leaders can support wider dissemination of posts from Hispanic- and Latino-serving community-based organizations and health centers and can highlight stories via city social media platforms from Hispanic and Latino community members who have been vaccinated. For a video by Hispanic filmmakers following a family discussing myths and facts about COVID-19, sample social media posts, and other resources, visit vaccineshelp.org (English) and vacunashelp.org (Spanish).
- ◆ **Other trusted sources as defined by the local Hispanic and Latino community.** Prominent community members like news anchors, business owners, teachers and others may be trusted and influential. Be sure to follow the communities' lead and only use spokespeople who are vaccinated.

Support messaging campaigns.

Trusted Hispanic- and Latino-serving organizations have created **science-based toolkits and resources** that provide vaccine information in Spanish, English and other languages. (See the [resources section](#) for links.)

City leaders can help **support development and distribution of informational resources** through appropriate channels like community health centers and community-based organizations. City leaders can also place **public service announcements** (PSAs) in Spanish-language newspapers and community publications, and use **existing city communication channels** (e.g., website, social media, signage, collateral materials, public access radio and television, text services, interviews and speaking engagements) to promote materials and amplify community messages.

For inspiration, check out [Abuelina](#)—an animated character created by Montgomery County's Latino Health Initiative: [Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar](#). The Hispanic grandmother character reminds viewers to mask up, use hand sanitizer and get vaccinated. The idea grew out of conversations with the Hispanic and Latino community.

Track and counter misinformation.

If you repeatedly see—or learn from your partners about—persistent myths and misinformation, **address it directly in your messaging and communication.** Here are some sources to help track and debunk misinformation:

- ◆ [NLC's Toolkit for for Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Communication](#) (see page 12 for messaging to counter misinformation).
- ◆ CDC: [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#).
- ◆ Johns Hopkins Medicine: [COVID-19 Vaccines: Myth Versus Fact](#).
- ◆ The Public Health Communication Collaborative offers [resources for responding to misinformation](#) (guidance on what to respond to directly/proactively; what to respond to only if directly asked; and what to ignore and not further fuel).
- ◆ [MotherToBaby](#): Expert information about medications—including the COVID-19 vaccine—and other exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

One of the most persistent pieces of misinformation and confusion is about **safety of vaccines for pregnant women**. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages all pregnant people or people who are thinking about becoming pregnant, and those breastfeeding, to get vaccinated to protect themselves from COVID-19.²⁴ Pregnant and recently pregnant people are more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19 compared with nonpregnant people. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can protect against severe illness from COVID-19.²⁵ COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy may also protect babies.²⁶

Challenge:

Logistical Barriers



Logistical barriers can include lack of internet access to find and schedule appointments, gaps in access to transportation, distance to the nearest vaccination site and lack of convenient appointment times.

What Cities Can Do:

Bring vaccines to the community.

Community health centers and Hispanic- and Latino-serving community-based organizations are often leaders in organizing vaccine delivery, mobile clinics and other creative approaches to get vaccines to communities which have lacked access. City leaders can support these efforts by:

- ◆ **Recognizing and appreciating** community health centers and community-based organizations for their tireless work.
- ◆ **Reaching out** to community health centers and community-based organizations to explore ways to collaborate and amplify their work.
- ◆ **Identifying and/or providing spaces for vaccination clinics** that are safe and accessible to Hispanic and Latino community members, such as churches, libraries, worksites or community centers, as well as city owned and managed facilities.
- ◆ **Arranging transportation** to and from sites by working with the municipal transit authority. Ride-sharing companies like [Lyft](#) offer free rides nationwide to vaccination sites.

- ◆ **Organizing vaccination drives** to bring vaccines to neighborhoods, parks, businesses, schools, libraries and sports stadiums. Several cities across the country have teamed up with health clinics and local pharmacies to establish **vaccine fairs and mobile vaccine tours**. These events also help to spread trustworthy information about vaccines and provide opportunities for community members to ask questions. Promotores de salud and community health workers can canvass the neighborhood in advance and the day of, to inform residents about the opportunity to get vaccinated.
- ◆ **Supporting school-based health centers** to engage families as the vaccines become available for children. Many parents are eager to have their children vaccinated; others have questions. School-based health centers, school nurses and community health centers are a vital resource.

***(Longer-term strategy)* Expand broadband internet access.**

Lack of internet access is a major barrier to receiving accurate information about vaccines and making an appointment to get vaccinated. City leaders can use the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Emergency Broadband Benefit program or other funds to expand broadband internet to communities with low access—and create a vital long-term asset for communities.

Challenge: Documentation and Immigration Status



Those who are working on legalizing their status as well as undocumented community members have expressed concern about the consequences of going to a vaccination site.²⁷ Many are concerned that they will be asked to provide a Social Security number or government-issued identification before they can receive the vaccine.²⁸ Some people may also be worried about providing personal information, like their name, phone number or home address—which is required to receive the vaccine—for fear that the information will be used by immigration agents.

What Cities Can Do:

Spread the truth.

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** and **National Immigration Law Center** have stated that vaccines are available to anyone, including those who are undocumented, regardless of their immigration status. City leaders can reinforce the following message in all communication with the public and partners:

“Vaccines are free and available to all people living in the U.S., regardless of immigration or insurance status. Vaccination sites do not have immigration enforcement and you will not be deported if you get the vaccine.”²⁹

City leaders should reiterate to organizers of vaccination clinics that they do not need to—and should not—ask people for ID, Social Security number or insurance in order to be vaccinated.

Ensure safe, welcoming spaces.

Having familiar, friendly faces at vaccination clinics makes people feel safe and welcome. City leaders can partner with *promotores de salud*, community health workers, staff from Hispanic- and Latino-serving community-based organizations or recognizable community leaders to greet people at vaccination clinics and help them through the process of getting vaccinated.

City leaders can request that the National Guard not be present at vaccination clinics. Unfortunately, members of the National Guard are required to wear their uniform at all times, which can make them resemble Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. This can deter undocumented community members from getting vaccinated.

Examples From Cities Across the Country



**Dallas County,
Texas**

Coalition of cross-sector partners

Cities in Dallas County partnered with Latino community organizations and nonprofits to form a coalition known as [La Alianza DFW](#). The coalition developed and distributed materials in Spanish on how to protect yourself from COVID-19 and the importance of getting vaccinated.



**Fresno,
California**

Youth promotores de salud promote vaccinations among peers

Cultiva la Salud has established partnerships with the Fresno School District, Public Health Department, and the Immigrant Refugee Coalition, to enable easy access to vaccinations for parents and students in their community. Trained promotores de salud, including youth promotoritos, combat vaccine misinformation and promote vaccination events at public schools.



**Omaha,
Nebraska**

Offering vaccinations for front-line workers at worksites

One World Omaha, a Federally Qualified Health Center, has partnered with a local meat-processing plant resulting in over 90% of their employees obtaining vaccination. Given the role of the plant in the community, vaccination events have been held there that are open to the entire community. Once vaccine booster shot eligibility is available, One World plans to offer booster shots to over 600 employees and their families.

Examples From Cities Across the Country



**Denver,
Colorado**

Promotores encourage vaccination door-to-door in vulnerable communities

Promotores trained at Tepeyac Community Health Center visited over 3,000 households in a largely Latino neighborhood to educate residents about vaccines and set up mobile vaccination sites, resulting in around 1,000 people agreeing to get vaccinated. Residents indicated that the personal connection from local promotores made a difference in trusting the vaccine.



**Memphis,
Tennessee**

Pop-up vaccination sites at community churches

In partnership with health workers, medical professionals and **Latino Memphis**, a group of volunteers established pop-up vaccination clinics in Hispanic churches. Right after Mass, churchgoers are able to get their COVID-19 vaccination and answers to their questions in Spanish, in a trusted environment that is safe and comfortable.



**Santa Ana,
California**

Citywide bilingual public awareness campaign

Santa Ana Unified School District, nonprofit **Latino Health Access** and the City of Santa Ana launched a citywide public awareness campaign, in Spanish and English, to help curb the spread of COVID-19. The campaign, **#ProtegeSantaAna** and **#ProtectSantaAna**, aimed to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases and protect the health of family, friends and neighbors. The organizations distributed thousands of yard signs and posters to residents and businesses to encourage essential pandemic safety messages: Cover your face, wash your hands, stay 6 feet apart. Banners bearing the message were placed at schools and other locations.

Resources

- ◆ Su Familia National Hispanic Family Health Helpline (1-866-783-2645) where individuals can call to get the latest information in Spanish or English from a public health advisor and, by providing their zipcode, be referred to COVID-19 vaccination and health resources where they live.
- ◆ NLC Toolkit: **Resources for Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Communication**
- ◆ National Alliance for Hispanic Health *Vacunas* COVID-19 Resources Page in Spanish (www.vacunashelp.org) and English (www.vaccineshelp.org) has a range of resources, including the following:
 - ◇ *Of Reasons and Rumors* film by Hispanic filmmakers, which follows a family (with some members hesitant about getting vaccinated) as they discuss if they can come together to celebrate their grandmother's birthday
 - ◇ Searchable link for COVID-19 vaccine locations
 - ◇ Downloadable Family Bingo Game about COVID-19, explaining key terms and ways to protect our health
 - ◇ Sesame Street in Communities resources for talking with young children about health emergencies
 - ◇ Content for social media campaigns (and more!)
- ◆ HELO Policy Brief: **State of the Digital Divide in the Hispanic Community**
- ◆ **Latino Community Foundation Toolkits** (PSAs, social posts, print materials)
- ◆ CDC: **Communication Toolkit for Migrants, Refugees, and Other Limited-English-Proficient Populations**
- ◆ American Heart Association: **Stay Fuerte for All!**—animated shorts, PSAs, social media information and more on COVID-19 and vaccines in direct, plain language (English and Spanish)
- ◆ Ad Council and COVID Collaborative:
 - ◇ **Hispanic Community COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit** (English) / **Herramientas para comunidades hispanas** (Español)
 - ◇ **The Hispanic Faith Community on COVID-19 Vaccines** (Español)
 - ◇ **Host a Virtual COVID-19 Vaccine Education Event for Your Church** (English) / **Organice un Evento Virtual de Educación Sobre la Vacuna Contra el COVID-19 Para su Iglesia** (Español)

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