



Strategies for Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy in Cincinnati's Latino Population

Mercy Health, bi3, and Interact for Health
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Introduction

Health leaders and foundations have identified Cincinnati neighborhoods with large Latino populations as key areas in which COVID-19 vaccine uptake is disproportionately low. As hospitalization and mortality rates remain consistently [higher among Hispanic and Latino](#) populations nationwide and variants of COVID-19 drive surging case rates--[with serious cases concentrated among the unvaccinated](#)--it is crucial to close that gap in vaccination rates.

Interact for Health, Mercy Health, bi3, and the Cincinnati Health Department recognize that to accomplish this goal, it is essential to first identify the unique concerns and sources of vaccine hesitancy among Latinos in Cincinnati, as well as the barriers they may face to receiving the vaccine.

Cohear engaged 15 Latino Cincinnatians through two focus groups to uncover their questions, sources of hesitation, and ideas for improving vaccine messaging and access. Ages ranged from 12-75, most individuals were originally from Guatemala or Mexico, and individuals were centered around the Price Hill and Carthage areas.

Key strategies which arose from these conversations include: clarifying that no identification is necessary to receive the vaccine; providing opportunities for people to talk to Spanish-speaking doctors and nurses about their concerns, and creating Spanish-language resources about the vaccines' ingredients.

Though participants all had varying reasons for not having taken the vaccine, one theme emerged which was common to all: they felt most at ease when they were able to communicate with experts in their native language who respected their questions and concerns and took the time to provide meaningful answers. Connecting Spanish-speaking doctors and health professionals to opportunities to speak at churches, on Spanish radio, and at existing community events could be an extremely impactful step for the Latino community in Cincinnati.

Sources of Hesitancy and Concern

- A concern that the vaccine was developed and approved too quickly to trust its safety
- For people who work under different names than are displayed on their identification, employer mandates will force them into dangerous situations regarding their immigration status
- The vaccine will negatively affect pre-existing health conditions
- Confusion regarding the differences between the vaccines: ingredients, companies, methods for generating immunity, etc.
- Some representatives of the Catholic Church initially told parishioners not to get vaccinated, and then shifted their messaging in ways that have caused confusion
- A belief that the vaccine contains live COVID-19 virus
- Fear of side effects and not having access to reliable medical information
- A belief that the vaccine contains the Mark of the Beast



Key Insights and Recommendations

- Encourage parents to get vaccines on behalf of their kids, e.g. "If you get sick, who will take care of them? Get vaccinated for your kids."
- Avoid dogmatic or judgmental attitudes by acknowledging nuance and the legitimacy of some hesitancy
- Emphasize that people are not required to provide identification when they receive COVID-19 vaccinations
- Explain the rigor of the FDA approval process and the amount of data showing vaccine safety thus far
- Highlight that scientists have been studying coronaviruses since SARS, and that the technology used in the COVID-19 vaccines has therefore been in development for 20 years
- Seek out opportunities for Latino medical professionals to answer questions in informal, conversational settings
- People were very appreciative of the chance to ask questions of Latino doctors directly, and said things like "I wish everyone I knew had this opportunity, it was incredibly helpful for me," and "When it comes from a reliable source like a doctor, instead of Facebook, more people will rely on the information."
- Create and share explanations in Spanish about:
 - The vaccination process
 - No insurance/identification required to get the vaccine
 - Core ingredients
 - Differences between the vaccines

Messaging Guidance and FAQ

From doctors and hospitals:

- "The vaccine's science is based on 20 years of research that started with the SARS virus."
- "It is OK to have questions--we understand. But trust us: Getting the vaccine is safe, and is the best way to protect your family from the virus. "
- "Each of the vaccines is safe and effective, and none of them contain the COVID-19 virus."
- "The vaccine is safe for most people, even if you have other health conditions! Call or text your doctor to ask about your pre-existing conditions and the COVID-19 vaccine."
- "We know you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines, and we are here to help! Please text us your questions and we'll do our best to answer. "

From religious leaders:

- "The Catholic Church and Pope Francis fully support getting vaccinated."

General Messaging

- "Your family needs you! It's not too late to get the vaccine to keep your family safe. The process is simple and free, and no insurance or identification is needed."
- "Getting vaccinated is safe, easy, and free. You don't need insurance or official identification."



Specific Outreach Strategies and Locations

- Workshops and Q&A sessions at churches and community events:
 - St. Lawrence
 - Holy Family Parish
 - St. Leo's
 - La Vina
- Advertise on and send representatives to join specific radio and social media shows:
 - Jorge Benedetti
 - La Mega radio
 - Elizabeth Herrera ("she's the one people listen to and trust the most.")
- Recreation Centers in Price Hill
- Boys and Girls Club
- Casa de Paz
- Phoenix Group at Crossroads
- Saturday community gatherings e.g. the one at Holy Family Parish
- Send Spanish-speaking medical professionals to speak at Sunday Mass services at the Catholic churches in Price Hill



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