

PRESS RELEASE

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Alianza Americas and its Partners Highlight Barriers to Vaccination for Non-English Speaking Communities

[Link to press conference](#)

NATIONWIDE – Today, Alianza Americas and partners of Somos Salud, a coordinated health initiative funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), discussed the diverse obstacles to accessing the COVID-19 vaccine facing many in non-English dominant communities throughout the country. Speakers also discussed what community organizations are doing to ensure people have reliable information and access to the vaccine.

Participating Somos Salud partners include the US-Mexico Border Health Commission, The Latino Commission on AIDS, Presente.org, and 18 other Alianza Americas member organizations. Since the beginning of the pandemic, they have all been working on the ground to address the need for information, personal protective equipment (PPE), testing, treatment, and vaccinations for their communities.

"Alianza Americas has embarked on this ambitious collaborative project because it understands the urgent need that health inequities represent to immigrant communities in the U.S. The pandemic has shed light on the long-standing inequities that impact our life expectancy, overall health, and wellbeing," said **Oscar Chacón, executive director for Alianza Americas**, the lead organization behind the program. "Elected officials do not understand the complexities of working with Latin American communities. It is an opportunity to educate elected officials and opinion-makers when it comes to disparities in health services. This is the beginning of a task to educate and empower more community actors."

Panelists shared some of the biggest obstacles faced by their respective communities in accessing the vaccine, such as language barriers to CDC guidance, lack of public transportation in rural areas to attend vaccine sites, lack of access to technology to make vaccine appointments, and lack of accessible vaccination schedule availability.

"Sometimes we find that even within the Guatemalan community, there are different languages spoken," said **Isai Pazos of CIELO**, a Los Angeles-based organization that works with indigenous communities from Guatemala.

Carolina Ortiz, Communications Director of COPAL, outlined the difficulties of reaching out to rural communities: "Some of the hard-to-reach places are not part of priorities, so we had to go to them. We have a hotline, we go to their workplaces, Latino supermarkets, and talk to them about either getting them registered or, if we find there is vaccine hesitation, it's a great opportunity to talk to them and give them reliable information. This played a big part in gaining their trust."

Yaqueline Lopez, of Women Working Together (FL), talked about an effort in Broward County, Florida to provide undocumented immigrants a municipal identification so they could get vaccinated as county residents: "A majority of the people couldn't have access to vaccines because they didn't have an ID. But because of our push, they now have an approved municipal ID so they can get vaccinated."

Juanita Lara, program manager of the U.S.- Mexico Border Health Commission added: "Even my mother has questions about safety [regarding the vaccine], but it is a matter of simply informing our community. It's important that the correct information gets to the people that need it, and they arrive [based on] their own decisions."

Karen Blanco, of Casa Yurumein (Bronx, NY) said: "We have made great strides. We had to tell [clients] that it didn't matter that they were undocumented. I am happy that my Garifuna community has left fear behind."

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[Alianza Americas](#) is a network of migrant-led organizations working in the United States and transnationally to create an inclusive, equitable and sustainable way of life for communities across North, Central and South America.

[Presente.org](#) is the nation's largest online Latinx organizing group — and the nation's premier Latinx digital organizing hub — advancing social justice with technology, media, and culture. Presente.org's mission is to advance Latinx power and create winning campaigns that amplify Latinx voices; expand the political imagination and traditional boundaries; and foster inspiration for freedom, equity, and justice.

The U.S.- Mexico Border Health Commission (USMBHC) is a binational body, created in July 2000 through an Agreement between the governments of Mexico and the United States, in order to identify and evaluate the health problems that affect the border population, as well as facilitating actions for their care.

The Federal Governments of Mexico and the United States, through the Ministry of Health and the Department of Health and Human Services, are part of the organizational structure of the USMBHC and actively participate in various initiatives.

The [Latino Commission on AIDS](#) is a non-profit organization founded in 1990 in response to the unmet need for HIV/AIDS prevention and care for Latinx/Hispanics. Our public health mission is to address the

impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, in the context of addressing health disparities, by spearheading health advocacy, promoting health education, developing and replicating evidence-based programs for PLWHA and high-risk communities, and by building capacity across the public health sector and strategic partners nationally.