

Multi-Campus Collaboration for Immigrant Health, Healing, and Advocacy

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Project Summary

Amid a time of heightened anti-immigrant rhetoric, our project aimed to address the urgent need for increased advocacy and community-informed support for immigrant patients in health care. To equip health professional trainees with the advocacy and community engagement skills necessary to promote equity and justice for immigrant patients, our project consisted of two components – the Immigrant Health, Healing, and Advocacy workshop series and participation in the California Immigrant Policy Center’s Immigrant Day of Action conference at the California State Capitol. The Immigrant Health, Healing, and Advocacy workshop series was a two-day virtual event hosted in partnership with legal experts, community leaders, and healthcare professionals. On Day 1, attendees participated in a psychologist-led reflection space focused on processing experiences related to immigrant health and trauma. On Day 2, attendees received training on access to public benefits, family preparedness planning, protecting immigrant patients from unlawful detention in health care spaces, and legislative advocacy skills. At Immigrant Day of Action, participants engaged in community-led workshops on immigrant health and advocated for state bills advancing immigrant health.

Impact

Collaboration & Community-Building:

Our work brought together medical students from four UC campuses. While primarily led by medical students at UCLA and UCSF, our development phase included input from immigration-impacted medical students from additional schools, such as UC Riverside and UC Irvine. To ensure our Immigrant Health, Healing, and Advocacy series represented diverse voices from leaders in the community, medical students shared their insight and networks with the project leads. Including medical students from various campuses in our series development phase allowed for meaningful collaboration.

Psychologist-led reflection spaces and healing circles on the first day of the series fostered a sense of community among participants. Through in-person participation in Immigrant Day of Action, attendees further established these connections, finding community through their shared commitment to immigrant health equity.

Partnership:

Since our series was hosted in partnership with community stakeholders, our attendees gained exposure to community-led advocacy and policy efforts. Attendees also expanded their networks and have had the opportunity to foster academic-community partnerships since participating in the series.

Civic engagement skill-building:

Two pillars of civic engagement are advocacy and community partnership. In addition to gaining education on essential topics in immigrant health, attendees participated in didactic programming that equipped them with the practical skills to advocate for immigrant health and ethically engage with the community. Through this project, attendees received the training to grow as civically engaged leaders in health care and medicine.

The overarching project goal was to prepare medical students to meaningfully engage with immigrant communities at the individual, community, and policy level. The series provided a supportive environment to learn alongside community-engaged advocates with real world experience in different areas of immigrant health. The participants who attended the series remained actively engaged across both days, contributing thoughtfully to all of the discussions and activities, ultimately reflecting our definition of success.

All participants were medical students affiliated with a UC campus. The majority of participants were members of immigrant communities, and all shared an interest in immigrant health equity. Twenty trainees attended the entirety of the Immigrant Health, Healing, and Advocacy series and thirteen students from four medical school campuses participated in Immigrant Day of Action.

Our project allowed us to foster meaningful community partnerships with legal service providers and advocacy organizations. Our team aims to foster these relationships by continuing to invite community partners to teach-ins and advocacy sessions taking place at the UCLA campus and facilitating events where these organizations can provide a service to immigration-impacted community members.