



PI-CoPCE

PACIFIC ISLANDER CENTER OF PRIMARY CARE EXCELLENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Survey Uncovers NHPI Mistrust and Disenfranchisement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. – A survey conducted by researchers affiliated with Pacific Islander Center of Primary Care Excellence (PI-CoPCE) and the American Association of Psychologists (AAPA) conducted a survey that revealed a high percentage of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) are hesitant to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Approximately 43% of respondents aged 18 to 44 years noted reservations to the vaccine, which is concerning as 48% of them claimed to be essential workers. “The reluctance of NHPI essential workers to receive the vaccine hinders the national plan to garner herd immunity,” stated Melisa Laelan, Executive Director of the Arkansas Community of Marshallese and Co-Lead of the Pacific Islander COVID-19 Response Team (PICRT) Policy Council.

Manumalo Ala’ilima, Executive Director of UTOPIA Portland and PICRT Data and Research Council Lead notes “Longstanding inequities in income and education attainment have long played a crucial role in the decision of whether or not NHPI communities engage with recommendations such as vaccines.” 2/3 of respondents reported having a high school diploma and/or attended some college compared to 17% reporting have a bachelor’s degree. 68% of Marshallese and 62% of Samoans reported a loss of income during the pandemic with financial stressors identified by respondents as their top concern during the pandemic.

The survey also showed that 68% of NHPI noted difficulty seeing a medical provider during the pandemic. More than 40 % of Marshallese, Native Hawaiians and Samoans reported experiencing anxiety or depression during the pandemic. “Delays in receiving healthcare in our community that already has high rates of COVID-19 predisposes us to poor outcomes,” added Joseph Seia, Executive Director of the Pacific Islander Community Association and Co-Lead of the PICRT Policy Council.

These examples of disenfranchisement highlighted by the survey finding have prompted the PICRT Policy Council, Data and Research Council, Media Council and Resource and Engagement Workgroup to put forth the following recommendations:

1. Partner with NHPI CBOs to collect data through community and culturally aligned practices, inform policy and to fill in critical gaps in federal, state, and local government especially in regard to improving the likelihood of NHPI to ascertain a COVID-19 vaccine.
2. Fund poverty reduction programs aimed at increasing the financial autonomy of NHPI families in building wealth to close the wealth gap empowering and work towards closing the educational achievement gap in NHPI communities.
3. Expand all federally-funded benefits such as FEMA Funeral Assistance Program to include “Habitual residents” such as citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands living in the U.S.

#MORE#

The PICRT is a coalition of NHPI researchers, health professionals, CBOs and advocates that have taken aim to fight COVID-19 in NHPI communities by fighting against longstanding inequities.

About PI-CoPCE

The Pacific Islander Center of Primary Care Excellence (PI-CoPCE) was established to improve the health of Pacific Islanders in the United States and the U.S. Pacific through primary care support, research, workforce development, and community initiatives. PI-CoPCE is a self-governed, community-based initiative housed within the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations and is the only national health organization that focuses on and is governed by Pacific Islanders. For more information on PI-CoPCE, please visit www.pi-copce.org.

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