Community Priorities During Covid-19

Covid-19 has created both a public health and ensuing economic crisis that has affected everyone in San Mateo County. We are all on an unprecedented journey. But our communities of color, our low-income communities, our LGBTQI+ communities and other communities/identities that have historically been marginalized, already started this journey behind the eight ball.

Our most impacted communities are often essential workers on the front lines of exposure. Impacted communities were also already experiencing housing, job, and food insecurity, and increased chronic health conditions. And now with Covid-19, challenges have reached a tipping point. For example, more than 1 in 5 transgender adults have at least one or more existing chronic condition. And fear of discrimination and mistrust keeps many from going to the doctor. This creates a higher risk for the outcomes of Covid-19.

San Mateo County is very diverse. Over 60% of our population is people of color across the county, and in some census tracts that's up to 98% POC. The social factors that can challenge health equity were already in place before the crisis and now getting worse:

- Up to 37% of some census tracts experience overcrowded housing conditions, making it difficult to socially isolate, learn or work from home, and have personal space to destress.
- Up to 39% of some of census tracts are limited English speaking, making it more challenges to get accurate information and access resources during this crisis.
- People of Color and LGBTQI+ are disproportionately living in poverty. Our LGBTQI+ communities make up a high percentage of our homeless youth, and experience discrimination getting jobs and creating financial security along with our communities of color.
- Federal reserve data shows that almost 40% of Americans can't withstand a $400 emergency in any given month – and during this crisis, most of our impacted communities have this level of crisis if not much more. Especially our immigrant families and households without documentation, who do not qualify for unemployment or the federal stimulus relief, among other gaps in financial supports.

To ensure our most impacted communities are centered in the Covid-19 response and recovery, a community priorities list was developed with grassroots partners, residents and leaders in our most impacted communities. The list below represents feedback from partners across our Community Collaboration for Children's Success Initiative, our community organizing and CBO partners in direct relationship with hundreds of impacted residents, as well as feedback from a broad number of participants representing communities of color, immigrant populations, LGBTQI+, low-income residents at our virtual Covid-Town Hall on May 1st.

For more information of feedback from community partners, please contact Shireen Malekafzali, Health Policy and Planning, County Health – smalekafzali@smcgov.org, or call 415.271.3357.

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Community Priorities

- **Access to Easily Accessible, Cultural and Linguistically Appropriate Community Resources & Covid19-related Information**
  - One-Stop-Shop website for links for all community resources during Covid-19. It's hard to navigate and figure out where to get information about different issues and needs.
  - Translation of resources is critical.
  - Outreach to hard to reach populations via existing communication channels communities utilize (example radio, social media venues, church virtual groups, phone chains, etc) and via trusted community leaders. Having information on a website is not enough to reach all of our communities.
  - Ensuring outreach and communication is culturally appropriate by engaging community leaders for their expertise, feedback, and partnership.
- **Outreach and Engagement to Support Service/Resource Navigation**
  - Support identifying resources and navigating service needs
    - Having trusted community members and leaders support outreach and system navigation to ensure people feel safe to access resources, especially for our undocumented families and households
    - Forms that may seem simple are difficult to fill out and need support walking people through it or filling it out
  - Having specific communities of color and LGBTQI+ affinity groups where people can have trusted solidarity to get support and feel like they belong.
  - Ensuring continued resources for longer-term prevention even as we support immediate emergency needs is important for long-term recovery.
- **Promote Equity, Solidarity & Community Building**
  - Track data by race, place, SOGI and linguistic isolation, where possible.
    - Disaggregate Asians to understand the specific population issues. Consider partnering with other counties to get accurate PI data.
    - Where not possible, identify ways to set up systems to ensure disaggregation by race and SOGI going forward.
  - Prevent and stop xenophobia through proactive outreach and messaging campaigns. Specifically, support our Asian communities and our Black populations who are experiencing racism as they wear masks in public spaces.
    - Active Outreach on Community Solidarity through a messaging campaign
    - Developing clear language and messaging that enables essential workers to feel essential and not disposable, and enables impacted communities to feel seen and not sidelined.
  - Implement restorative justice practices instead of punitive enforcement approaches.
- **Housing stability**
  - Rental assistance funding continued to be needed and is critical to people feeling like they can stay in their homes. Support to navigate the process and fill out paperwork is needed.
  - Eviction protections is vital to stability and shelter.
  - Expanding Eviction Protections and Moratorium on Rent Increases beyond the Shelter In Place Order as much as possible as people struggle financially to get back on their feet.
  - Locations for homeless to shelter and allowing all homeless options for hotel voucher not just some

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- o Specific Houseless Shelter/Resources for the Transgender and Non-Binary communities for they can feel comfortable and safe.
- **Food Security**
  - o Access to healthy foods for all
  - o Prepared food deliveries for those that are not mobile
  - o Hot meals made available through EBT use when grocery stores may not be accessible, or they may not have access to cooking facilities
  - o Supporting our farmworkers as they ensure food on our tables to make sure they feel safe and protected
- **Financial Security**
  - o Access to jobs to return to when the economy opens up. Including access to job training opportunities and apprenticeships into industries that are revived.
  - o Resources for small business to stabilize and withstand this time
  - o Eviction protection for small businesses
  - o Basic income could help communities overcome major financial barriers, especially for those most vulnerable
- **Resources for immigrant families and households without documentation**
  - o Removing barriers as much resources for those that do not qualify for unemployment and other benefits or resource channels
  - o Ensuring sanctuary and safety as immigrant families access resources
  - o Conducting outreach through trusted channels in the undocumented community
  - o Ensuring language and messaging that ensures our immigrant families and households without documentations feel like they belong and are essential parts of community
- **Internet and Cell Data access**
  - o More vital than ever now that education and connection is mostly focused on line
  - o Chrome books and devices are necessary for children and adults to navigate this time
  - o Stable internet access across San Mateo County so families are not left behind as information and resources are shared, as well as children's learning
- **Education, Families & Childcare**
  - o Need mental health support for families and children/youth during this challenging time
  - o Access to chrome books and internet access – they are basic essentials not a luxury
  - o Activities for children/youth that are enriching that are virtual or have activity materials to pass out to families so children have access to enrichment.
  - o Childcare for essential workers during work.
  - o Childcare for families during essential activities for caregivers such as medical appointments.
  - o Specific supports and resources virtually for families who have children that are questioning their sexuality and/or gender.
  - o Supplemental tutoring or supports for children's learning, to help with homework and other needs.
- **Healthcare & Frontline Workers**
  - o Increase testing for Covid-19, specifically in underserved communities and for essential workers. Testing should be free, easy to access in our communities without a car, and without symptoms and other requirements
  - o Personal Protective Equipment for healthcare and frontline essential workers across sectors including farmworkers.
  - o Enforcement of adherence to labor laws and protections for frontline workers
  - o Healthcare coverage

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- o Providing virtual healthcare for County clients and beyond. And allowing County clients to make online appointments and access medical information.
- **Mental Health Support**
  - o Increased mental health support since anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges are all heightened.
  - o Supports to overcome isolation, especially for older adults
  - o Suicide prevention is particularly important right now.
  - o Violence prevention, especially in the home against children and women.
- **Domestic Violence Prevention & Response**
  - o Proactive outreach via phone, video and text to those that may be in need to see how they are doing and providing space to share if challenges are occurring. This is especially important for children since there are fewer people who can see if issues are coming up in the home to call for help.
  - o Rapid response to domestic violence calls.
  - o Proactive outreach, education and support for previous perpetrators and victims, and to the broader population focused on prevention, de-escalation, anger management and more.
- **Transportation Access**
  - o Options for transportation that are inexpensive. Cost of transportation has risen with Uber/Lyft being primary options for those that do not have a car. Many low-income people do not have a car and depend on the limited transit options.
  - o Transit options that help people access essential work, goods and services.

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