

CT HEALTH FOUNDATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of New Haven Health Department (NHHD) is seeking \$217,030 in funding to implement a Community Health Worker pilot program that simultaneously addresses the disparate impacts of COVID-19 and seasonal influenza on low-income, Latinx, and Black/African American residents in the City of New Haven. Since the pandemic began, the (NHHD) has been a leader in the fight against COVID-19 and has worked to achieve its mission of advocating for and ensuring the health and well-being of all New Haven residents.

The NHHD COVID-19 response has included, but it not limited to, working with community medical providers to establish pop-up testing sites in neighborhoods identified as “hot spots” within the city to identify additional positive cases by standing-up and supporting point-prevalence surveys in skilled nursing/long term care and assisted living facilities. Contact tracing and follow-up with individuals who tested positive or who had a presumptive positive diagnosis was conducted by NHHD to ensure individuals were self-isolated and/or self-quarantined to prevent the spread of the virus. The NHHD also developed a robust 24/7 COVID-19 hotline, which is staffed by public health nurses who answer callers’ questions about symptoms, isolation, precautions and guidelines, locations of testing centers. The hotline also incorporated an interactive dashboard to track and trend COVID-19 data including the number of cases, demographic information, death data and hospitalization data within the City.

The Director of Health and other City officials have been working diligently to provide residents with current information of the COVID-19 situation in New Haven and ways to prevent its transmission. These prevention efforts, which were specifically designed through a health equity lenses, included “Spread the Facts, Not the Virus” and “Mask It Up”. These bi-lingual media campaigns worked to educate residents on the importance of wearing a face mask and other prevention measures to reduce the risk of exposure.

Despite these efforts, 2,985 New Haven residents have been diagnosed with COVID-19 since March 2020. In New Haven, older individuals and individuals of color were disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Among the 113 COVID-19-associated deaths in the City, 76% were 65+ years old (y/o) and 20% were 50-64 y/o. Nearly half (45%) of these deaths were among the City’s Black/African American population.

As with COVID-19, the NHHD takes a proactive approach to protecting residents’ health during flu season. Each year, the NHHD conduct flu vaccination clinics throughout the City. During the 2019-2020 flu season, 66 flu clinics were offered at which 1,170 individuals were vaccinated against the flu. However, as with COVID-19, Latinx and Black African American residents were disproportionately affected by seasonal influenza during the 2019-2020 flu season, accounting for more than 66% of all flu cases in New Haven. Among the residents diagnosed with the seasonal flu last year, 59% were 50 years of age and older.

The NHHD proposes hiring six part-time community health workers (CHWs) to provide community outreach and education to prevent the spread of both COVID-19 and season influenza

among New Haven's low-income, Latinx, and Black African/American populations. Under the supervision of the Health Department's Epidemiologist and Director of Public Health Nursing, Each CHW will work in one of the six high-need neighborhoods in New Haven. The neighborhoods are Fair Haven, the Hill, Dwight, West River, Dixwell and Newhallville. The CHWs will conduct community-based and web-based outreach to build trust within their assigned neighborhood to effectively educate residents on ways to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and seasonal influenza, assist with COVID-19 contact tracing, provide information on how and where to receive a COVID-19 test and flu shot, and to assess an individual's or family's basic needs and their ability to self-isolate if a member of a household has tested positive or has a presumptive positive test for COVID-19, and to identify community resources to help address their specific needs. Lastly, the CHW will provide non-clinical support at community-based flu clinics.

Marketing and educational materials will be developed to promote the COVID-19 and seasonal flu prevention guidelines. These materials will be distributed throughout the six neighborhoods and posted to the NHHD's webpage. Written materials will be given to individuals visiting COVID-19 testing sites and community flu clinics.

The work of the CHWs will be tracked and analyzed through the web-based platform, VEOCI. Questionnaires/Forms regarding basic needs and flu vaccination will be used to capture data from New Haven residents and identify gaps in needs and potential locations where flu clinics can be offered.

The funding request of \$217,030 will be used for salary and fringe of CHWs, educational materials, office supplies, and indirect costs. A more detailed budget, including justification, is included below.