

# Engaging Same-Day Peer Ambassadors in Unsheltered Settings

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# Funding Statement

This project was supported by the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine COVID-19 Research Fund [HE-0024] : Awarded to Dr. Chelsea Shover

Housing for Health (HFH) COVID-19 Response Teams (CRTs) were funded via grants awarded to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health:

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (ELC Enhancing Detection - 6 NU50CK000498-01-09 and ELC Enhancing Detection Expansion - 6 NU50CK000498-02-04) as Supplemental funds for CK19-1904 (ELC Enhancing Detection through Coronavirus Response and Relief (CRR)

# Overview

1

Peer Ambassador  
Program

2

Integrating  
Knowledge and  
Services

3

Lessons Learned

4

Funding

# What Are Peer Ambassadors (PAs)?

## Eligibility:

- Must be vaccinated and 18+
- Experiencing homelessness (current or previous)
- Sign informed consent/liability waiver

## Tasks:

- Encourage their community to become vaccinated
- Conduct outreach with UCLA and/or HFH staff
- Increase vaccine education
- Improve community health

## Compensation:

- \$25/hour in the form of a gift card
- Max of 4 hours per day
- Max of 20 hours over the course of the study



Photo credit: Al Seib for *Los Angeles Times*

**What qualities should a good PA have?**

# Why Recruit Same-Day Peer Ambassadors?

They say things we can't

- "Get over here, I know you aren't vaccinated yet!"
- "You're worried about magnetic waves? That's B.S."
- "I wasn't even really planning on getting it. But these guys came, I did it, and it's fine"
- "You weren't worried about what's in the syringe when there were little brown things in yours!"

They know their community

- They know:
  - Who is or isn't vaccinated
  - People's names and which tent is theirs
  - People who don't like to talk to people they don't know
  - Who may not be the most welcoming
  - Who is seriously anti-vax
  - Things about the encampment we don't

They aren't people with badges and clipboards

- Some people did NOT let us approach them until we came back with a PA
- Given historical instances of breach of trust or exploitation, it can be intimidating for someone with a county or university badge
- PAs are typically their friends or at least a familiar face

# Incorporating the PA Into Outreach Team

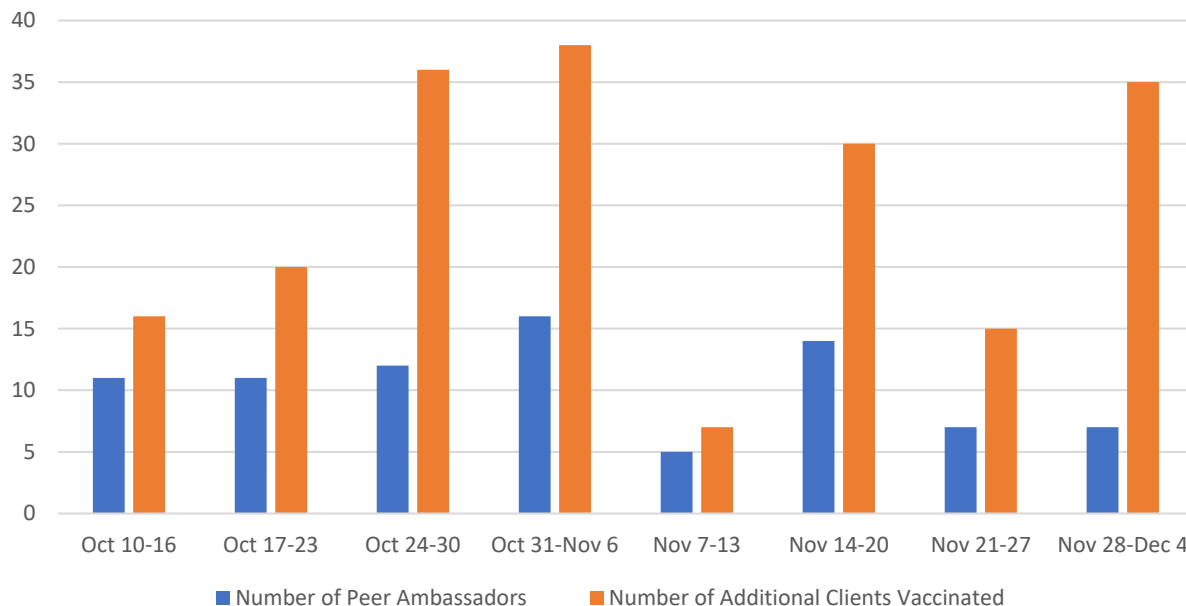
- Introduce them to the team
- Refer to them as a your colleague
- Remind them how important their work is
- Hats/Beanies
- Give them outreach materials to hand out
- Include them in huddles if you can



Photo credit: Al Seib for *Los Angeles Times*

# Peer Ambassadors Work!

Number of vaccines attributable to Peer Ambassadors



- 117 PAs (unsheltered) participated
- ~ 2 additional people vaccinated per PA
- Accounted for 26% of all doses at the 71 events we held

**Figure 1.** Weekly sum of Peer Ambassadors (PA) and additional clients vaccinated as a result of the PA. Data on additional clients vaccinated after speaking to a PA was available for 71 total events. These events took place over the course of 33 distinct dates, which occurred over the course of these 8 weeks (Sunday-Saturday). Note that these dates are non-consecutive. Data collection did not begin until October 13, 2021, halfway through week one.



# Implementation After Research Phase

Research lasted from August 2021 – December 2021

Housing for Health leadership received internal funding to implement this as a program

- Less constraints due to research protocol
- Still compensating PAs for their work

# Implementation: Integrating Knowledge and Services



**01**

Program Side



**02**

Research Side



**03**

Street Side



**04**

Funding

# Communication – Program Side

Building capacity at all levels

- Weekly meetings
- Training multiple members of team
- Having the correct champions
- Modeling program before implementation
- Trust



Photo credit: Al Seib for *Los Angeles Times*

# Communication – Program Side

## Community Conference

- Checking in with community partner
- Incorporated people from all positions within the team, not just CHWs
- Provided professional development workshops



# Training – Research Side

Required training:

- Safety training video
- Research ethics (CITI) training
- In-person consent training
- Mock informed consent until proficiency reached



# Responsibility – Research Side

- Minimal risk to study participants
- Making sure trainings were complete
- Ensuring team was comfortable carrying gift cards
- Reporting any adverse events to IRB





# Field Safety – Protocols

## Pre-Outreach Huddle

- Established safety word/phrase
- Team introduced themselves and position

## Emergency Huddle

- Occurred if safety code/phrase was used

## Post-Outreach Huddle

- Re-group and discuss anything that happened during outreach





# Field Safety – Street Smarts/Situational Awareness



- **Be aware of your surroundings**
  - Situational awareness is key – trust your instinct
    - You might see something no one else has seen, communicating this helps keeps everyone else safe
  - Assess the situation when you are entering
    - Look for dogs and any other indications of a pet, watch peoples body language, walk up slowly
    - Start looking from the ground up, not waist up
  - Know the area, know who runs the block
    - Establish allies with people there to build rapport
- **Know the difference between if someone is mad or threatening**
  - Is the behavior dangerous or merely disruptive?
  - 6-10 second window of listening and in that short conversation you can judge where the conversation is going

# De-Escalation Techniques

## Scenario 1

- You finish setting up for your event and begin placing food and other incentives on the table. An individual not registered for the vaccine clinic shows up and starts grabbing the incentives. They become agitated when you talk to them about it.

## Scenario 2

- You are conducting outreach near a local library and say good morning to someone who is outside of their tent. The individual gets very upset at this and curses at you.

# Crisis Communications - Before

## Leadership must establish a method of communication

- Make this a priority and make it a protocol before an incident occurs
- Establish and communicate what the minimum information needed is when reporting
- Establish the communication method that everyone should use when reporting

# Crisis Communications - During

When an event occurs, notify your supervisor/team lead as soon as it is safe to

- Err on the side of reporting
- Follow the reporting guidelines your organization decides on

## Supervisors/team lead

- Notify others on the team so they are aware of the incident within a reasonable timeframe
- Provide resources/training for those involved

# Crisis Communications - After

## Debriefing

- Make sure anyone that was/could be impacted by the event knows
- Leadership should decide in advance what CHWs should do if they are dissatisfied with how the incident was handled

## **Improve team communication = Improve safety practices**

- For example, if there is a client that makes a CHW feel uncomfortable, communicating this with the group can help others be aware of this when in the area

# Cost-Effectiveness of PA Program

- At 71 events where data were available for the number of additional clients vaccinated as a result of talking to a PA, 197 additional people were vaccinated over 167 PA hours. This corresponds to a gift card cost of **\$21.19** per additional person vaccinated
- A study of U.S. Medicare beneficiaries found that the average cost per COVID-19 related hospital stay was over **\$21,752**, rising to **\$49,441** for those who needed a ventilator, and **\$32,015** for those who died<sup>1</sup>



Photo credit: gograb.com

# Lessons Learned

- Crisis communications must be implemented early
- Gradual implementation of the study/program helps build rapport, identify possible issues, and figure out how to help the community partner
- PAs were already doing this work, we provided empowerment and feedback
- The consenting process provides a useful framework
- Check-in to help people feel safe and reach goals

# Acknowledgements

**Principal Investigator:** Chelsea L. Shover, PhD  
Assistant Professor-in-Residence, UCLA School of Medicine

**Deputy Medical Director of Housing for Health:** Emily Thomas, MS,MD

**Peer Ambassador Team Leadership** (COVID Response Team): José Mata, BA (Senior Program Manager) Priyanka Guha, MSHA, Lindsey Richard, BA, and Gunner Sixx (PA Coordinators)

**COVID Response Team Leadership:** Emily Uyeda-Kantrim, MBA , Heidi Behforouz, MD, Ahn Nguyen, MS, Brooke Robie, BS, Jonni Miller, MSW

**Community Health Workers:** Angel Baez, Anthony Coleman, Sarah Harvell, BA, Shirnae Jackson, AA, Caroline Lee, AA-T, Maya McKeever, BA, Adam Rice, Marisol Rosales, BA, Jordan Spoliansky, Joanna Swan, BA, Nastassia Williams, Cynthia Angel, Osvaldo Mesa, Kenny Torres, BS, and all the CHWs continuing the work today

**Individuals on COVID Response Team Who Consented PAs:** Carrie Millet-Niles, MPA, Kyran O'Green, Gabriel Cardenas, MA, Joey Pangilinan

**Supervising Epidemiologist** (COVID Response Team): Allison Rosen, PhD

**UCLA Graduate Students:** Jacqueline Beltran, BS, Ashley Frederes, MPH, Anna Bratcher, PhD, Julissa Alvarado, BS, Rafik Wahbi, MPH, Candelaria Garcia, BS, Ivan Beas, BS

**Peer Ambassadors!**



# References

1. Tsai Y, Vogt TM, Zhou F. Patient Characteristics and Costs Associated With COVID-19-Related Medical Care Among Medicare Fee-for-Service Beneficiaries. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2021/08/17 2021;174(8):1101-1109. doi:10.7326/M21-1102

# THANKS!

## DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?



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