



Community Ambassadors

Program Overview

The Community Ambassadors initiative prepares trusted community messengers to share important public health information and answer questions from their networks. By partnering with healthcare agencies, we create bidirectional dialogue between community leaders and



medical experts about health issues. This system creates direct avenues for inclusion of community members in problem-solving and innovation that helps keep their families and neighbors healthy, especially in times of crises like a pandemic.

Current Activities

The Ambassadors have launched with a focus on COVID-19 testing, tracing, and vaccination. An initial set of Ambassadors received training from Camden County Health Department and Camden Coalition's Chief Medical Officer so that they could share information about where to get tested, answer basic questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, and

encourage harm-reduction approaches to reducing the spread. Community Ambassadors are passing out fliers in Camden neighborhoods and high traffic areas while Network Ambassadors are disseminating information through existing communication channels.

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Future Opportunities

While COVID-19 has brought to light the need for a more robust public health infrastructure, we believe Ambassadors can be a part of a long-term strategy to improve connection between medical experts and everyday people. They can identify public health issues, such as the opioid epidemic or environmental toxins, in the community and advocate for resources while public health professionals can channel research, investment, and infrastructure to the areas identified. Conversely, Ambassadors can help translate public health guidance with awareness of barriers that might prevent adherence in ways that result in increased trust and action among their communities.

Funders

An initial investment was made by Cooper University Health System and Camden County for community outreach to raise awareness about new neighborhood-based COVID testing sites. The Camden Coalition took this opportunity to launch the Community Ambassadors work that had already been discussed as a way to centralize the inclusion of community members in public health outreach being requested by various public and private agencies. Shortly after its launch, an individual donor gave a gift dedicated to this work. Since then, we have submitted proposals for additional funding from public and private entities.