

BUILDING TRUST AND CONFIDENCE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Promoting stronger collaborations between academic medicine, public health departments, social services agencies, and community-based organizations



The University of Cincinnati College of Medicine was selected by The American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) to promote confidence in COVID-19 and routine pediatric vaccines and increase vaccinations. To engage and educate community members about vaccines, they used graphic-style storybooks that were co-designed and developed with community representatives. The storybooks describe how vaccines work, how they are tested, and why it is important for the community to get vaccinated. Health Champions were identified and trained on how to read these stories aloud with community members and then hold non-judgmental, meaningful discussions about the importance of vaccines in diminishing the spread of infectious diseases. The contents of this brief focus on the second year of grant activities (October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023).



WHAT STRATEGIES HAS UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI IMPLEMENTED?

The Health Champions used two storybooks : “Take Your Best Shot” that focuses on COVID-19 and the vaccine and “Voices for Vaccines” that focuses on vaccines preventing both adult and pediatric disease. The storybooks were improved by adding Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that commonly came up in the Health Champions’ conversations with community members and different characters were introduced in later versions to better appeal to the intended audience. The storybooks were released in English and Spanish. FAQs were also printed on poster boards in English and Spanish for use at health fairs and given to health departments and school-based clinics for public display. The Health Champions distributed the storybooks and posters through a combination of community partner events, personal networks, and services to school-age children and their families.

WHO DID UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI SERVE OR ENGAGE?

The University of Cincinnati partnered with the Cincinnati Health Department who fostered connections with community organizations and supported the training of Health Champions. Health Champions are staff of community organizations; nurses and nurse practitioners from community and school-based health centers; and Master of Public Health and medical students. Through strong ties to their communities, the Health Champions are reaching underserved populations in Greater Cincinnati.

WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES?

- Developed two culturally relevant stories in both English and Spanish
- Distributed over 800 copies of revised storybooks
- Trained over 75 Health Champions
- Attended 14 community events
- Encountered over 500 community members through Health Champions interactions



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WHO DID UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI PARTNER WITH IN THE COMMUNITY?

The University of Cincinnati built relationships with multiple community partner organizations including We Engage 4 Health, First Ladies 4 Health, Health Care Access Now, Cancer Justice Network, and Santa Maria Community Services. Through their strong partnership with the Cincinnati Health Department, the University of Cincinnati engaged with these key organizations and community members to collaborate with and train Health Champions. Evaluators spoke to two Health Champions who attended community events and actively engaged community members in conversations about vaccines using the storybooks. These two Health Champions in particular supported the project by ensuring that the educational materials resonated with the communities and were culturally and linguistically relevant.



PARTNER PERCEPTIONS Both Health Champions had positive perceptions of the project. They had an equal seat at the table during the editing and revising process of the storybooks to ensure the characters and the language used would be relatable and effective with their community members. One Health Champion discussed the inclusion and trust the University of Cincinnati built with their community partners. The Health Champion said,

“I feel like [program staff] included me in something that 9 times out of 10 our community as a whole would have been left out of. They’ve entrusted me to facilitate these safe environments where [community members] will actually share how they feel.”



PARTNER BENEFITS

The storybooks were effective for having conversations with community members, who at first may have been shy about reading out loud and role playing. However, by the end, Health Champions reported community members were very engaged and asked important questions. The Health Champions felt this communication strategy was effective in addressing vaccine hesitancy. One stated, “This is a great communication tool to communicate with the community. I was really happy to be able to learn more and to be able to apply this for the Latino community.”



PARTNER CHALLENGES

Before the storybooks were edited with their input, community engagement was challenging because of the characters and themes. However, this challenge decreased because of the collaborative process of modifying the storybook for cultural relevance.

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