



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Community Engagement

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS

The Community Engagement (CE) Core at the Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute (SC CTSI) had an exciting and impactful 2024. We continued to strengthen and expand academic and community partnerships, grow our education and capacity-building training programs, and contribute to a range of research activities.

This report highlights our accomplishments from the past year, including the expansion of our place-based efforts across South Los Angeles, the launch of a new capacity-building training for community health workers, the adaptation of health-based initiatives in collaboration with the Southern California Center for Latino Health, the fourth year of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) project, the provision of health resources to the community, and the increased evaluation and dissemination of our work.

We placed a strong emphasis on disseminating our achievements to broad academic and community audiences, including posts across our social media platforms, articles published on our website, and presentations of our work at national conferences and professional meetings.

We are fortunate to have a diverse and dedicated group of individuals on our CE team, who are committed to improving and enhancing the lives of the community.



Michele Kipke, PhD
SC CTSI Co-Director and Director for
Community Engagement



Nicole Wolfe, PhD
Co-Director for Community
Engagement at SC CTSI



Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati, PhD, MPH
Co-Director for Community Engagement
at SC CTSI



ABOUT THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CORE

The Community Engagement Core serves as a bridge between academic researchers and local communities, fostering sustainable partnerships to ensure that research initiatives address the genuine needs of the community.

We offer consultations to guide researchers in incorporating a community engagement perspective and adopting a community-based participatory approach in their work. These efforts provide insights into the health needs and research challenges faced by underserved communities, helping establish new collaborations with academic institutions, researchers, and local organizations.

Our community education and training programs support research literacy and address health topics relevant to the communities we serve, countering misinformation and building trust. Our approach is guided by our conceptual model and core principles of community engagement, emphasizing respect, collaboration, and the development of sustainable partnerships. This is achieved through bi-directional and open communication that values the perspectives and experiences of the community.

Through our work with both community members and researchers, we aim to increase the participation of underserved populations in research and ensure that the participant experience is positive and engaging.

Community Engagement's Programs and Services:

- Community Listening Sessions
- Place-Based Initiatives
- Workshops and Capacity-Building Training Programs
- Consultation and Research Support for Researchers at the University of Southern California (USC) and Children's Hospital of Los Angeles (CHLA)
- Community Partnership Development
- Evaluation and Dissemination

Community Engagement Core's Conceptual Model



THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM



Front row, left to right: Andrea Diaz, Communications Lead; Mayra Rubio-Diaz, Program Manager; Adriana Argaiz, Associate Director of Community Engagement with SCCLH at CHLA; Nicole Wolfe, Co-Director of Community Engagement; Sara Calderon, Community Outreach Coordinator; Rosalba Cain, Community Outreach Coordinator.

Back row, left to right: Esther Karpilow, Community Outreach Coordinator; Brian Do-Golden, Research and Evaluation Analyst; Tyrone Nance, Lead Community Outreach Specialist; Natayla Seals, Community Outreach Coordinator; Alma Garcia, Community Outreach Coordinator.



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY PLAN

Our Communications Strategy Plan uses social media, articles, and newsletters to raise awareness of our mission, strengthen community partnerships, educate on health disparities, and establish benchmarks for community-engaged work in academic and medical settings.

In 2024, we continued to refine this strategy to effectively reach, connect, and engage with our diverse audiences.



Facebook was particularly effective in engaging older Latino community members with Spanish-language content. Younger audiences, primarily English-speaking and under the age of 35, were attracted to TikTok, with content that emphasized the importance of participating in health research studies. Instagram continued to engage community organizations, academic and medical institutions, and individuals of all ages interested in our impact on public health and research. Across all platforms, storytelling techniques consistently outperformed other types of content, enhancing our visibility and engagement. Collaborations with community partners extended our reach and further validated our community-engaged communication approach.

We also continued our outreach through monthly newsletters distributed in English and Spanish, which provided updates on educational workshops, community events, health research studies, and professional development trainings for community health workers, as well as practical tips for healthier living.




We published articles to inform audiences about our ongoing initiatives in community-engaged work. These articles detailed our approach, highlighted achievements, and shared examples of effective collaboration with community partners.

To ensure the success of these efforts, we tracked key performance indicators, including website traffic, social media engagement, and newsletter reach. Regular analysis of this data guided adjustments to our strategy, ensuring alignment with audience needs.

The Communications Strategy Plan has been instrumental in achieving our communication objectives. Its adaptability and focus on continuous evaluation have strengthened our connection with diverse audiences, laying the foundation for future growth and impact.



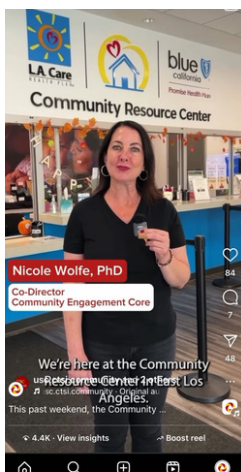
2024 SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING ANALYTICS OVERVIEW

			
TOTAL NUMBER OF POSTS	87	41	6
AVERAGE REACH PER POST	311	80	7,736
AVERAGE NUMBER OF VIEWS PER REEL TYPE POST	423	N/A	13,750
TOTAL FOLLOWERS GAINED IN 2024	280	72	605

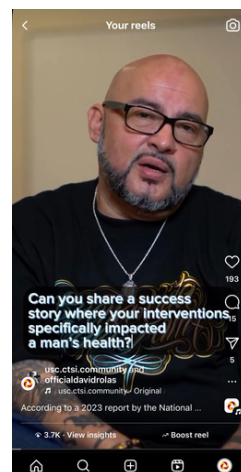
TOP PERFORMING POSTS OF 2024






 49K+ PLAYS
 1,821 INTERACTIONS



 4K+ PLAYS
 133 INTERACTIONS
 2,401 REACH



 3K+ PLAYS
 2,534 INTERACTIONS
 2,389 REACH



PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

PLACE-BASED APPROACHES

We expanded our reach in South Los Angeles, bringing new initiatives to the broader community. We continued our collaboration with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) to improve health outcomes in the community of Nickerson Gardens. We organized monthly canvassing efforts to raise awareness of educational health workshops focused on chronic diseases, offered in both English and Spanish.

We strengthened partnerships in this area throughout the year and launched a three-part interactive, educational nutrition series for South Los Angeles residents, aiming to promote healthier eating habits. The series covered topics such as food deserts, food swamps, diabetes, obesity, stress, reading food labels, and practical tips for making informed food choices. Each session included informative handouts tailored to the topics discussed. The series was presented at partner organizations across South Los Angeles including, Cadence Apartments, part of Linc Housing, a nonprofit organization that develops affordable housing and offers supportive services to its residents, as well as at South Los Angeles churches, including Saint Mark United Methodist Church and McCarty Memorial Christian Church, conveniently scheduled on Sundays after morning service to meet people where they are.

Building on the success of these sessions, we plan to continue offering the series in 2025, further empowering communities to make healthier, informed decisions about the food they consume.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ALLIANCE (CEAL)

We have continued our collaboration with the Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) through the National Institutes of Health (NIH). CEAL is a research network that has collaborated with communities and community organizations to conduct research and communicate findings to local communities.

We completed a collaborative mental health capacity-building project with academic partners from Stanford University, UC Davis, UC Merced, and UC Irvine, as part of Year Three of the project. Working with our community partners, Visión y Compromiso and Esperanza Community Housing, we trained 30 community health workers who collectively delivered over 90 educational workshops on mental health topics in their communities. The project culminated in an in-person meeting that included a certificate ceremony, lunch, and a roundtable discussion to gather feedback on the training program's impact.

In 2025, we will begin a new project with the CEAL collaborative to initiate the new funding round for Year Four. This project is a statewide initiative involving all academic sites in California that are part of the CEAL collaborative, including UCLA, UC Davis, UC Merced, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, UC San Diego, UC San Francisco, San Diego State University, and Scripps Health. We are continuing our partnership with Esperanza Community Housing for this initiative as well. The goal of this project is to collaboratively develop, implement, and evaluate a technical assistance program to support leadership and staff at community-based organizations in providing innovative social care through effective public service partnerships.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CENTER FOR LATINO HEALTH

The Southern California Center for Latino Health (SCCLH) is a regional collaborative research center led by CHLA and USC. Its mission is to support a regional coalition of academic and community partners dedicated to eliminating chronic health disparities in obesity, type 2 diabetes, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, and dyslipidemia among Latino children and families through inclusive and culturally sensitive interventions and research.

The SCCLH and CE worked diligently to address health disparities and promote better health outcomes across Southern California through workshops in both English and Spanish focusing on health topics such as nutrition, diabetes, chronic diseases, mental health, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, obesity, and dyslipidemia, which disproportionately affect the Latino community.

In September 2024, the SCCLH hosted the Southern California Center for Latino Health Research Showcase, an event dedicated to advancing knowledge and addressing health disparities affecting Latino communities.

The showcase highlighted new research, pilot projects, and community partnerships, with contributions from a diverse range of speakers and participants affiliated with institutions such as USC, CHLA, San Diego State University, Scripps Whittier Diabetes Institute, Sansum Diabetes Research Institute, and others. Rosalba Cain, Community Outreach Coordinator for SCCLH and SC CTSI, was a featured panelist, sharing perspectives on community priorities, partnerships, and health research.

The SCCLH and CE will continue to build on these initiatives, broadening capacity-building opportunities and developing collaborations to address chronic disease disparities and enhance the health and well-being of medically underserved communities in Southern California.



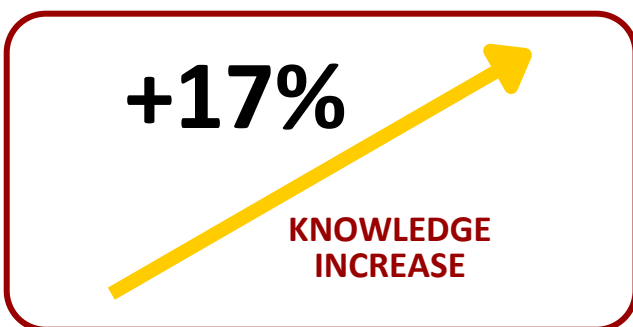
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

WORKSHOPS

In 2024, we conducted 110 culturally tailored, language-specific educational workshops, attracting nearly 1,750 attendees from communities across South, Central, and East Los Angeles. These workshops, offered in both English and Spanish, primarily targeted Black and Latino populations and were aligned with the community's interests and needs.

The workshops were delivered in collaboration with a range of community partners, including local schools, faith-based groups, community-based organizations, and government officials.

Workshop topics included health research studies, Alzheimer's disease, autism spectrum disorder, alcohol use disorder, mental health, and reproductive health. Additionally, we collaborated with the SCCLH to develop and deliver workshops on nutrition, diabetes, chronic diseases and mental health, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, obesity, and dyslipidemia. Workshops averaged 16 participants, reflecting steady community interest and involvement.



87 participants have shown interest in learning more about upcoming research opportunities.



THE FUNDAMENTALS OF HEALTH RESEARCH: TRAIN-THE-TRAINER FOR PROMOTORES DE SALUD

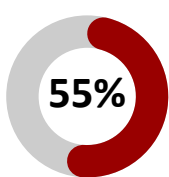
As part of our ongoing capacity-building efforts to expand research education in Latino communities, we continued our "Fundamentals of Health Research" program in 2024. This train-the-trainer initiative, designed for Spanish-speaking community health workers, consists of an interactive 12-hour training program covering core topics such as an introduction to research, types of research, the research process, and research participant protection.

Participants were tasked with developing and presenting a research project relevant to their community's health concerns. We evaluated the program's impact through pre- and post-training surveys to measure knowledge gained and followed up to assess how this information was applied in their professional activities.

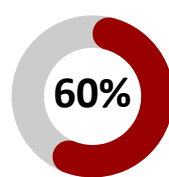
In 2024, we trained 68 community health workers across five cohorts in collaboration with community partners. Initial key findings from these trainings included a 25% increase in knowledge between the pre- and post-training survey as well as considerable knowledge retention when comparing the post-training and three-month follow-up scores.

We received one-year follow-up surveys from over half of the 2023 "Fundamentals of Health Research Train-the-Trainer" participants. All 68 respondents had either conducted workshops, shared information, or developed informational materials based on their training. Since completing the training, 55% had participated or were participating in a clinical trial or research study, with 60% referring someone to a clinical trial. These results underscore the significant and lasting impact of the training, empowering participants to actively engage in and advocate for health research within their communities.

12-Month Follow-Up



Are currently enrolled or are now participating in a clinical trial or research study since taking the training.



Reported referring someone to a clinical trial since completing the training.

Participants exhibited strong confidence levels.



Average rating for teaching health topics.



Average rating for explaining clinical trial risks.



Average rating for explaining clinical trial benefits.



DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS AND AUTISM TRAINING

The Developmental Delays and Autism training launched in fall 2024 to address disparities in diagnosing and caring for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other developmental delays within the Latino community. This six-hour training provided community health workers with the tools and knowledge to support early detection and intervention for children under the age of three. In 2024, 15 community health workers from across Southern California participated in the training. They learned to identify signs of developmental delays, understand the importance of early intervention, navigate the healthcare system to secure necessary services, and advocate for early intervention.

The curriculum included four key areas:

1. Empathy: Cultivating understanding and connections with families.
2. Autism Spectrum Disorder: A review of symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment options.
3. Advocacy: Strategies for advocating for early diagnosis and intervention.
4. Services: A summary of local resources and support services.

This training empowered community health workers to increase awareness within their communities, assisting parents in recognizing developmental concerns early and connecting with appropriate resources to work towards better outcomes for children and families through timely care and support.



HEALTH FAIRS & TOWN HALLS

During National Diabetes Month in November 2024, we hosted two events in East and South Los Angeles, addressing chronic diseases, including diabetes, that disproportionately affect Black and Latino communities.

On November 9th, we hosted the Diabetes Health Fair and Town Hall event at the L.A. Care and Blue Shield Promise Health Plans' Community Resource Center in East Los Angeles. Partnering with USC Alfred E. Mann School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, the Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine, and the USC Keck School of Medicine, the health screening event offered glucose, cholesterol, body fat evaluations, foot exams, and resources. Spanish-speaking attendees participated in an educational discussion on diabetes prevention led by Jeany Jun, PharmD, MPH, Associate Professor at USC Mann, while students and preceptors assisted over 90 community members.

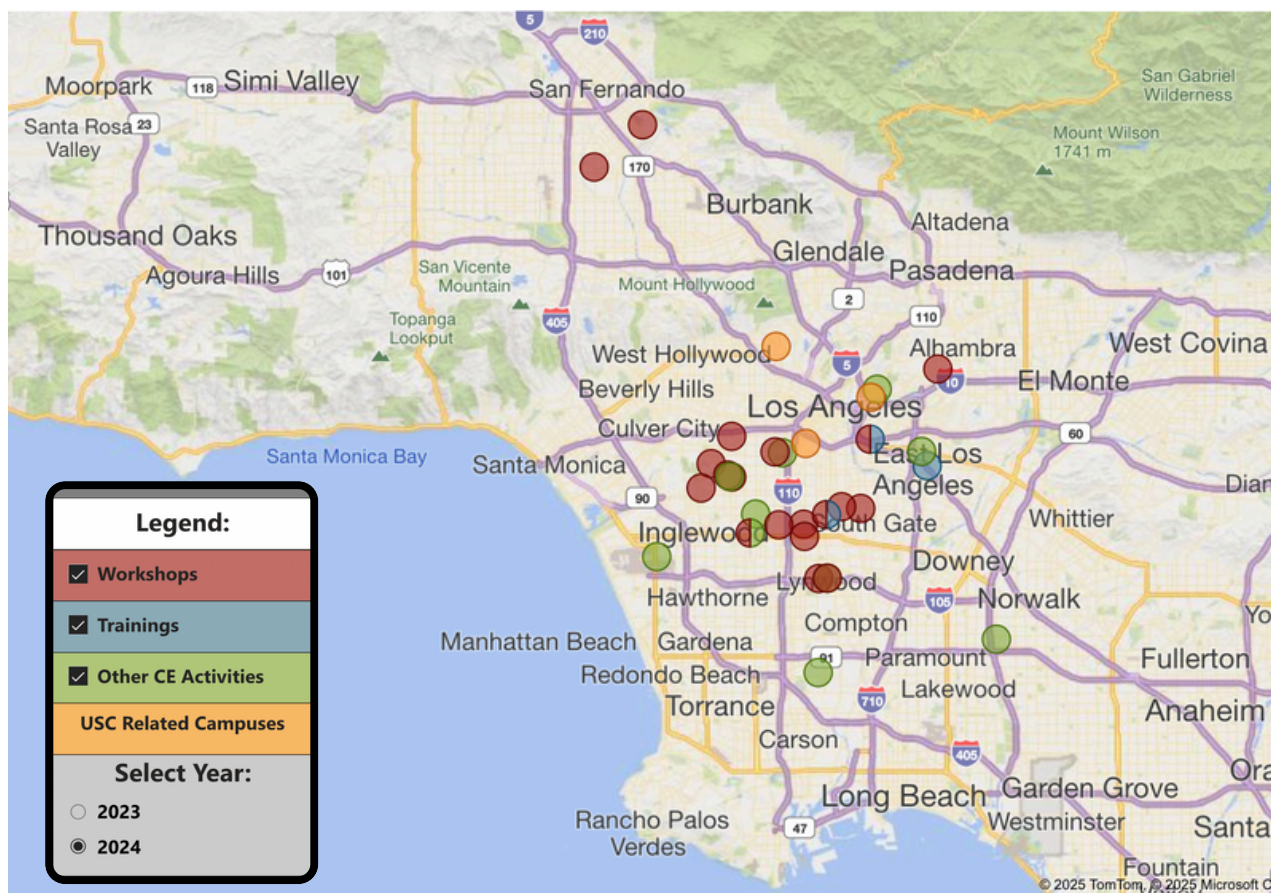
On November 14th, we hosted a second event at Saint Mark United Methodist Church in South Los Angeles in collaboration with community partners like All of Us, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, Kedren Health, Epiphany Counseling, Irth, and the office of Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson. Organizations hosted information booths, and the All of Us research program, funded by the National Institutes of Health, enrolled participants while educating them on its mission to advance health research.

Jerry P. Abraham, MD, MPH, CMQ, Director and Chief Vaccinologist at Kedren Health and Co-Director of CDU-Kedren Mobile Street Medicine, spoke to community members about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black and Latino communities, chronic diseases, and navigating the healthcare system. He encouraged community members to advocate for their health needs.

These health events showcased the power of partnerships in providing resources, education, and health screenings, underscoring SC CTSI's commitment to reducing health issues in East and South Los Angeles.



2024 ACTIVITIES MAP



The map above marks the locations of workshops, trainings, and other community activities that the CE team either coordinated or attended in 2024.

View the interactive map here: <https://bit.ly/3QeVVHX>.



INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In 2024, we continued to build on the success of our internship program with California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), a four-year public university located two miles from the USC Health Sciences Campus in East Los Angeles. This semester-long internship provided hands-on opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. We hosted one Master of Public Health (MPH) student, Gricelda Alcantar, who joined us in the office, participated in our workshops and events, and developed a workshop on postpartum anxiety and depression.

Additionally, we offered internships to three MPH students from USC: Mia Chakroun, James Settles, and Claire Woodrow. As part of their program's practicum requirement, these interns analyzed data from health education workshops, trainings, and community listening sessions, transforming findings into actionable strategies to address community health needs.

At the conclusion of the internships, we conducted exit interviews to understand and improve the experience for future interns. The feedback highlighted the program's provision of practical, hands-on experience, enhancement of skills in research and community engagement, and the opportunity it gave students to directly impact medically underserved communities. Moving forward, we plan to continue expanding the internship program to support more students while addressing critical health disparities in local communities.



Gricelda Alcantar, MPH (CSULA)

Gricelda is a dedicated public health professional with 14 years of experience in underserved community health settings. During her graduate internship with the SC CTSI, she conducted research on postpartum depression and anxiety among Latina mothers to develop and present a bilingual health education workshop with curated culturally tailored resource toolkits for participants.



Mia Chakroun, MPH (USC)

Mia was an MPH graduate student at USC with a passion for improving health outcomes and centering community voices. Through her work with the SC CTSI Community Engagement team, she leveraged her qualitative research skills to code and evaluate community listening sessions, informing a comprehensive needs assessment.



James Settles, MPH (USC)

James is a student intern with SC CTSI on the Community Engagement team. He graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and is currently in his second year of the MPH program at USC, specializing in biostatistics and epidemiology.



Claire Woodrow, MPH (USC)

Claire is currently a student at USC working toward her MD-MPH dual degree. She hopes to pursue a career in medicine as both a physician provider and health advocate on behalf of her patients.



PRESENTATIONS

- “Grief and Resignification: Learning to Live Without the Loss” by Sara Calderon. Presented at the East Los Angeles Women’s Center, “Promotoras Contra la Violencia Annual Conference” at The California Endowment on January 24, 2024.
- “Promoting Health Equity in South Los Angeles: A Place-Based Initiative in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Development.” Nicole Wolfe, PhD; Tyrone Nance, MA; Mayra Rubio-Diaz; Natayla Seals; Esther Karpilow; Alma Garcia; Sara Calderon; Michele D. Kipke, PhD. Presented at the Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS) Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada from April 1 to April 5, 2024.
- “Advances in Diversifying Research Teams: Lesson Learned Across Three CTSA Hubs.” Nicole Wolfe, PhD, presented with Rebecca Lobb (Boston University), Johanna Chesley (Boston Medical Center), Kate Marusinsa (University of California, Davis) at the Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS) Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada from April 1 to April 5, 2024.
- “Grief and Resignification: Learning to Live Without the Loss” by Sara Calderon. Presented at the “Mente Sana, Vida Plena” Conference, Cerritos College Student Center on May 25, 2024.
- “Use of Asynchronous Online Focus Groups (AOFGs) for Formative Evaluation of Vaccine Education Campaigns” by Shardae Osuna, MSW; Nicole Maccalla, PhD; Brian Do-Golden, MPH, CHES. Presented at the American Evaluation Association (AEA) Conference in Portland, Oregon on October 25, 2024.
- “Evaluating impact: Restrategizing and reorganizing data collection for community engagement initiatives and analysis” by Brian Do-Golden, MPH, CHES; Nicole Wolfe, PhD; Mayra Rubio-Diaz; Michele D. Kipke, PhD. Presented at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting & Exposition in Minneapolis, Minnesota on October 28, 2024.
- “Capacity building for community health workers: Follow-up results for a train-the-trainer program on research fundamentals” by Nicole Wolfe, PhD; Alma Garcia; Mayra Rubio-Diaz; Brian Do-Golden, MPH, CHES; Sara Calderon; Michele D. Kipke, PhD. Presented at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting & Exposition in Minneapolis, Minnesota on October 29, 2024.
- “Increasing access to chronic disease prevention education for Latino populations: A peer-to-peer training program for community health workers” by Adriana Argaiz Parra, MSSP; Alma Garcia; Nicole Wolfe, PhD; Mayra Rubio-Diaz; Rosalba Cain; Brian Do-Golden, MPH, CHES; Michele D. Kipke, PhD. Presented at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting & Exposition in Minneapolis, Minnesota on October 30, 2024.



ARTICLES

- [Community Engagement Core Hosts Health Fairs to Support Medically Underserved Communities](#)
- [SC CTSI Partners with SCCLH to Launch Project Dulce, a Comprehensive Diabetes Management Program](#)
- [SC CTSI Community Engagement partners with universities and community organizations to develop mental health training for promotores de salud](#)
- [SC CTSI Partners with Scripps Whittier Diabetes Institute for Project Dulce Training Aimed at Spanish-Speaking Community Health Workers](#)
- [SC CTSI facilitates successful kick-off meeting for the Nickerson Gardens Coordinating Council](#)



TESTIMONIALS

"I am grateful to have participated in the mental health training that the SC CTSI hosted for community health workers. I believe that for all of us who participated, it was incredible to have the opportunity to adapt the material to our own terms and words, so we can bring it to the community. That is participatory education, and it's what our community truly feels in their hearts – you make a heartfelt connection. It's heart-to-heart."

- **Community Health Worker**

"I am so grateful for the Community Engagement team. Often, it feels like our small community in Florence-Firestone is the last to be considered for educational opportunities, such as learning about health research studies. I truly appreciate the team for coming to our community to provide this education."

- **Florence-Firestone Community Organizer**

"I've had a longstanding relationship with the SC CTSI. Together, we worked closely during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that Black and Latino communities were vaccinated, had the information they needed, and received equitable access to public health programs. Our relationship has grown since then, especially through collaborations like hosting a health fair in South Los Angeles. We've built partnerships in the community to meet people where they live, work, worship, play, and go to school."

- **Jerry P. Abraham, MD, MPH, CMQ, Director and Chief Vaccinologist at Kedren Health and Co-Director of CDU-Kedren Mobile Street Medicine**

"A large part of the problem with the lack of community participation in these types of clinical trials is the lack of knowledge about the procedure and the purpose of the trials. By educating the population, we can change people's way of thinking because, as one woman told me in one of the training sessions: 'I always thought it was just for using them [as test subjects], but now I understand that much of the medical progress is thanks to these types of studies.' The ability to hear that at least one person's perception has changed and that they will now share the information with their family is a great step forward."

- **Community Health Worker from East Los Angeles Women's Center**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Community-Based Organizations

- Un Paso Más en la Inclusión
- Para Los Niños
- Esperanza Community Housing Corporation
- Visión y Compromiso
- East Los Angeles Women’s Center
- It’s Bigger Than Us
- Florence Firestone Community Organization
- USC Pathways
- Champions in Service
- Plaza Comunitaria Sinaloa
- Hope Street Group
- YMCA East Los Angeles
- L.A. Care
- Blue Shield Promise
- Epiphany Counseling
- Irth

Health Institutions

- Keck School of Medicine of USC
- USC Alfred E. Mann School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine
- Kedren Health
- Charles R. Drew University of Medicine & Science
- Clínica Romero
- USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Children’s Hospital Los Angeles
- AltaMed
- Southern California Center for Latino Health

Schools

- Hillcrest Drive Elementary
- Windsor Hills Elementary
- Gage Middle School
- Loren Miller Elementary School
- Los Angeles National Land Trust - Fremont High School
- Linda Marquez High School
- South Park Elementary

Local Government

- Los Angeles City Councilmember
Marqueece Harris-Dawson, 8th District

Religious Organizations

- Saint Mark United Methodist Church
- McCarty Memorial Methodist Church

Housing

- Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles - Nickerson Gardens
- Linc Housing – Cadence Apartments
- Good Shepherd Manor

Federal Agency

- National Institutes of Health
- National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS)
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities
- NIH Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL)

Professional Associations

- Association for Clinical and Translational Science
- American Public Health Association

Foundations

- The Sharon D. Lund Foundation

