



June 2, 2020

PURPOSE;

The purpose, at this time, of the Austin Latino Coalition, is to address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic COVID-19 on the Latino population in the City of Austin. The Coalition requests the City of Austin: (1) develop a mitigation plan to specifically address the needs of the Latino population, which is transparent, inclusive and demonstrates accountability; and (2) the formation of a Latino task force specifically focused on the issues and needs of the Latino community during this pandemic. The expectations and recommendations are below:

EXPECTATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT AND INVESTMENTS

- Inclusive Involvement
- Targeted Communications and Community Engagement (based on data showing greatest need)
- Transparency, Accountability & Continuity

Recommendations to address COVID-19 health disparities in the Latino Community:

ACCESS TO RESOURCES:

1. Provide access to FREE testing (including asymptomatic individuals) for front line workers and people living in zip codes with a high concentration of Latino residents and/or high concentration of confirmed COVID-19 cases. The testing process should be simplified and barriers such as cost; language; location of testing sites and fear of deportation should also be addressed.
2. Provide FREE protective equipment, such as masks, hand sanitizers, supplies, and other PPE to essential workers, particularly in the construction, janitorial, health care, and hospitality industries. Free protective equipment and free testing should be distributed in zip code areas with high COVID-19 positive rates.
3. Provide paid leave, during the isolation period, for front line workers who test positive for COVID-19. Also, provide financial assistance to workers who had contact with COVID-19 and must quarantine for 14 days. Before testing, employees will be informed orally and in writing that they will receive paid leave in the event they test positive. The benefits should also be provided to co-workers who must quarantine.

OUTREACH:

4. Hire bilingual contact tracers to comprehensively address the higher COVID-19 rates among Latinos and front line workers which remains disproportionately high.
5. Create a Latino Task Force to provide input, make recommendations, and improve accountability for addressing the needs of the Latino community during COVID-19.

PREVENTION:

6. Develop a sustainable prevention program that takes immediate measures to lower COVID-19 cases in the Latino community. The program would remain active throughout the pandemic to mitigate the re-occurrence of high infection rates within the Latino population in Austin. .
7. Provide front line workers information and training on CDC decontamination guidelines and safety procedures. Provide workers with supplies to properly dispose of contaminated items. Consider setting up decontamination sites for front line workers as a priority COVID-19 preventive measure. Information to be widely disseminated in culturally relevant, bilingual format throughout the City of Austin and in Travis County.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

8. Report regularly on collaborations, strategies, and coordination with existing community efforts to mitigate the health crisis. Expand the number of Latino organizational partners and leaders working with Austin Public Health to lower COVID-19 in our community.
9. Provide information on COVID-19 funding which is required for transparency. Immediately provide access to data by individuals, organizations, and institutions serving the public. Information should include the source of funding, disbursement agency or person, target group(s), the scope of services, application process and eligibility, non-technical language, and direct contact information. All information should be provided in English and Spanish. And,
10. Provide leadership, improve accountability and transparency on all efforts and funding provided for addressing the impact of COVID-19 in the Latino community. Local elected leaders, including, COA City Council should recognize and acknowledge the need for additional resources and focus to combat the disparate suffering and negative economic impact caused by COVID-19 within the Latino Community in Austin.

CLOSING STATEMENT:

COVID-19 is a pandemic that recognizes no race, gender, age, zip codes, or nationality. However, due to the historical discrimination that has often posed barriers to economic advancement, lack of access to health care and other systemic inequities that still exist today, minorities and particularly Latinos have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. Latinos also make up the majority of front line workers in our region. Construction workers, restaurant employees, janitors, groundskeepers, and health care providers are all examples of professions in which Latinos are the majority workforce and risk daily exposure to COVID-19. The onus is on all Austin citizens, not just persons of color, to address the disparate impact of COVID-19 on Latinos and continue to work to eliminate systemic discrimination.

ABOUT the AUSTIN LATINO COALITION (ALC):

The Austin Latino Coalition (ALC) was established in 2013 as an alliance of Latino organizations and individuals to promote civic involvement and self-determination by Latinos in the City of Austin. ALC members include approximately a dozen community-based organizations and many more dedicated individuals who have joined to advocate for issues that improve the quality of life for our community and all of Austin.

Updated June 28, 2020