

REACH Buffalo, New York: Ferry Street COVID-19 and Flu Initiative
2022-2023 Evaluation Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

The CDC funded REACH Ferry Corridor Good Health Project is a partnership between CAI (Cicatelli Associates Inc) and the African American Health Equity Task Force (AAHETF) to address health disparities among historically marginalized communities in Buffalo, NY.

The purpose of this evaluation is to review data to assess the effectiveness, quality, outcomes, and implementation of activities and materials associated with this initiative. CAI partnered with the AAHETF (through their fiduciary agent P2Collaborative) and Calming Nature Doula Services (CNDS) in this evaluation (see Table 1 for information about their role). These stakeholders reported project activities to CAI which included collecting data from events they facilitated (e.g., number of participants, number of vaccines administered, etc.) and communication products they created and disseminated (e.g., social media reach) with the goal of increasing access and information to COVID-19 and flu vaccination. We routinely shared back data to our stakeholders during the 2022-23 performance period to help interpret evaluation findings during regular meetings to discuss project activities and made modifications as needed.

Table 1. Stakeholder/Partner Assessment and Engagement Plan		
Stakeholder/Partner Name	Interest or Perspective	Role in the Program and Evaluation
African American Health Equity Task Force (AAHETF)	A Buffalo-based coalition comprised of faith leaders, community advocates, academics, business owners, researchers, health, behavioral, and supportive service providers. This crucial partner brings authentic representation of community leaders from the African American and Latinx community and significant influence.	Collect, share, and help interpret data
Calming Nature Doula Services (CNDS)	We have been working closely with Calming Nature Doula Services to train Doulas and Breastfeeding Peers to deliver COVID-19 and flu vaccine messages tailored for pregnant women.	Collect, share, and help interpret data

2. ACTIVITIES TO BE EVALUATED

Our activities during the 2022-23 performance period built on previous REACH COVID-19 Flu Vaccine Supplemental Funding, and the REACH Ferry Good Health Project to enhance our partnership with community members and stakeholders to develop, implement, evaluate, and continuously improve a community centered approach to increasing COVID-19 and flu vaccine availability, accessibility, and confidence. In accordance with the Supplemental Guidance, and in alignment with our experience, we completed the following activities:

Focus Area A - Provide Insights to CDC Detailing Barriers to Vaccine Uptake

Conduct Needs Assessment. CAI, in partnership with AAHETF and CNDS and with support from REACH Community Vaccine Champions (CVCs), completed a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) to identify drivers of COVID-19 and flu vaccine hesitancy in our priority population. Data was collected between August 2022 and February 2023 via six listening sessions (20 participants) and a survey (280 participants).

Document and Share Findings. CAI's evaluation team collated findings from the community needs assessment and shared with CVCs, 18+ adults, breastfeeding doulas and peers, and healthcare providers to facilitate interpretation of needs assessment results and to inform our strategy for implementing activities.

Findings were shared with our partners and Buffalo stakeholders through participation in local workgroups to inform and synergize complimentary vaccine activities. CAI continued to maintain and update the REACH website (COVID-19 and Flu resource page) to facilitate awareness of and participation in vaccination activities. The resource page was also a repository for information about where COVID-19 and flu vaccines are accessible, updates regarding COVID-19 vaccines (e.g., updated COVID-19 vaccines) as well as information about the CDC Bridge Access Program, COVID-19 treatments and medications, quarantine and isolation information, mask guidance, at-home COVID-19 tests and data related to the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine (e.g., CDC data regarding COVID-19 deaths/hospitalizations by vaccination status in the United States).

Focus Area B – Equip Influential Messengers

We equipped trusted/influential messengers (CVCs) to support vaccine education and delivery. Building upon our previous COVID-flu vaccination efforts and our initial community needs assessment, it was essential to leverage personal relationships and trusted community members who can facilitate conversations that often tip the scale in decision-making.

CVCs were identified strategically, based not just on their interest and representation of the priority population, but also their formal and informal networks – for example, membership in faith-based groups, staff of community staples (barbershops, salons, local restaurants and retailers). CVCs received capacity-building trainings to gain the necessary knowledge for recruiting community members to participate in the CNA survey or CNA listening sessions.

Additionally, refresher trainings were conducted to ensure CVCs possessed the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 vaccination amidst the evolving pandemic landscape throughout the 2022-23 performance period.

CAI partnered with CVCs to develop community-based, culturally and linguistically appropriate education and outreach materials and messages that focused on: upcoming events that promote COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination, upcoming/ongoing vaccination opportunities/locations, long COVID, COVID-19 and flu prevention and treatment, and updated COVID-19 vaccines.

CAI and AAHETF implemented a comprehensive social media campaign to disseminate messages; and messages developed for this initiative were shared directly – through flyers, videos, digital media, palm cards, QR codes – by CVCs to their networks, as well as through a variety of more traditional channels like local radio and partner newsletters/listservs.

Focus Area C: Increase Vaccination Opportunities and Enhance Provider Partnership

CAI partner AAHETF, led activities to leverage our combined networks to connect the county health department, trusted healthcare organizations and other vaccination providers with key community institutions to set up temporary and/or mobile COVID-19 and flu vaccination sites in communities experiencing disparities to increase the number, range, and diversity of opportunities for vaccination. We continued to engage non-traditional institutions with large local footprints such as Dexter Pharmacy. In collaboration with our healthcare partners (e.g., Erie County Department of Health, Community Health Center of Buffalo), we looked for opportunities to bring vaccinations directly to the community.

3. EVALUATION APPROACH

Outcome Evaluation Overarching Question: To what extent did the REACH Ferry Corridor Good Health COVID-19 and Flu Initiative program improve and increase vaccine awareness and uptake by detailing barriers to vaccine uptake, equipping influential messengers, and increasing vaccination opportunities?

Table 2 lists our evaluation questions and the corresponding activities and their outcomes. We surpassed each of our proposed benchmarks except for training 30 CVCs. We fell short of training 30 CVCs due to prioritizing a smaller dedicated group's participation in community events throughout the performance period (a group of 12 CVCs recruited in early 2022). We implemented a rotating attendance system at community events, allowing each CVC valuable experience. This ensured they could build momentum and relationships within the community. Ultimately, this tailored strategy fostered effective community engagement and supported the initiative's overall success.

Table 2. Indicators, Benchmarks, and Completed Activities

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Program Benchmarks	Completed Activities
1. What is the number of educational materials (needs assessment findings) shared with partners?	Conduct a follow-up needs assessment from the last performance period to identify ongoing drivers of COVID-19 and flu vaccine hesitancy.	3 educational materials will be created and shared with partners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Needs Assessment Summary Report Community Needs Assessment Summary One Pager Community Needs Assessment PowerPoint (to be presented to and shared with partners) 	3 educational materials were created and shared with partners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Needs Assessment Summary Report Community Needs Assessment Summary One Page Infographic Community Needs Assessment PowerPoint (presented to and shared with partners)
2. What is the number of individuals trained to be an influential messenger (CVC)?	We will identify and train trusted/influential messengers (Community Vaccine Champions; CVCs).	30 Community Vaccine Champions trained	3 Community Vaccine Champions trained

3. What is the number of new events held to promote COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination?	Influential messengers will share messages learned from training widely with their peers and/or their clients	12 number of new events to be held to promote COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination	54 number of new events held to promote COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination
4. What is the number of people attending new events?	Influential messengers will share messages learned from training widely with their peers and/or their clients	200 number of people attending new events held to promote COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination	5120 estimated number of people attending new events held to promote COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination
5. What is the number of communication products developed?	Education and outreach materials and messages will be disseminated on social media and at outreach events held to promote COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination.	40 number of unique communication products developed	43 number of unique communication products developed (22 Social Media Posts, 10 Palm Cards, 5 Video Public Service (PSAs) Announcements, 4 Flyers, 1 Newspaper Advertisement, 1 Email Blast)
6. What is the number of new partnerships established with vaccination providers?	Increase Vaccination Opportunities and Enhance Provider Partnership	2 number of new partnerships established with vaccination providers	3 number of new partnerships established with vaccination providers (Community Health Center of Buffalo, Jericho Road Health Center, Tops Market Pharmacy)
7. What is the number of new vaccination sites established or helped to establish with vaccination providers?	Increase Vaccination Opportunities and Enhance Provider Partnership	7 number of new partnerships established vaccination sites established or helped to establish with vaccination providers	11 number of new partnerships established vaccination sites established or helped to establish with vaccination providers

We disseminated a survey to community members between July and September 2023 to further examine the impact of our initiative. 83% of respondents reported receiving at least one COVID-19 vaccine. Of those respondents, 62% received at least one dose at one of our community partners since COVID-19 vaccines became available (Table 3). Additionally, 70% of respondents had received at least one flu vaccine since 2021, 52% of those respondents received at least one flu vaccine dose at one of our community partners (Table 3).

Table 3. Where did community members receive a COVID-19 and/or flu vaccine?		
	REACH Buffalo Partner Location*	Other Location
Received at least one COVID-19 vaccine (including boosters)	61.65% (n = 82)	38.35% (n = 51)
Received at least one flu vaccine	51.85% (n = 56)	48.15 (n = 52)

*REACH Buffalo Partner Locations: Community Health Center of Buffalo (CHCB), Delavan Grider Community Center, Dexter Pharmacy/Prescription Center, Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH), Jericho Road Community Health Center (JRCHC), Martha Mitchell Community Center, Tops Market Pharmacy

4. SUMMARY

In accordance with the REACH Program – COVID-19 and Influenza Supplemental Guidance, we completed the present evaluation to answer the **Overarching Outcome Evaluation Question: “To what extent did the REACH Ferry Corridor Good Health COVID-19 and Flu Initiative program improve and increase vaccine awareness and uptake by detailing barriers to vaccine uptake, equipping influential messengers and increasing vaccination opportunities?”**

The Community Needs Assessment (CNA) culminated in a comprehensive report, a concise one-page infographic, and informative PowerPoint presentations. These materials were disseminated to both the community and our partners. Sharing the CNA findings not only promoted vaccine awareness but also provided valuable insights on how to further bolster community confidence in vaccines. Participants expressed a desire for:

- Enhanced information: More detailed information on vaccine and booster safety, including addressing specific concerns.
- Increased education: Comprehensive educational materials on vaccine effectiveness and its role in protecting individuals and communities.
- Building trust: Acknowledging missteps in messaging, vaccination/booster rollout, and addressing J&J vaccine concerns to foster trust and transparency.
- Supporting choice: Emphasizing the importance of individual choice when discussing vaccination and respecting individual decisions.

Drawing upon the CNA findings, we developed a range of communication materials (n = 43) to promote awareness of COVID-19 and flu vaccination, as well as readily accessible vaccination opportunities. These included palm cards, social media posts, flyers, video PSAs (played on advertising screens at the Galleria Mall to promote our pop-up clinic in March) and a newspaper advertisement. Additionally, we leveraged CNA insights to create key messages for CVCs to share at community outreach events. These messages further amplified vaccine awareness and encouraged community members to get vaccinated.

Led by CAI partner AAHETF, three crucial partnerships with vaccination providers were established. These partnerships facilitated the successful rollout of eleven vaccination sites

throughout the 2022-23 performance period (Figure 1). At these sites, a total of 741 COVID-19 vaccines and 2,154 flu vaccines were administered. Notably, a survey revealed that, since COVID-19 vaccines became available, 62% of vaccinated participants received their vaccine or booster dose at a partner site, while 52% of participants who received a flu shot since 2021 reported receiving the shot at one of our partner locations. This data underscores the significant impact of these partnerships in increasing vaccination accessibility within the community.

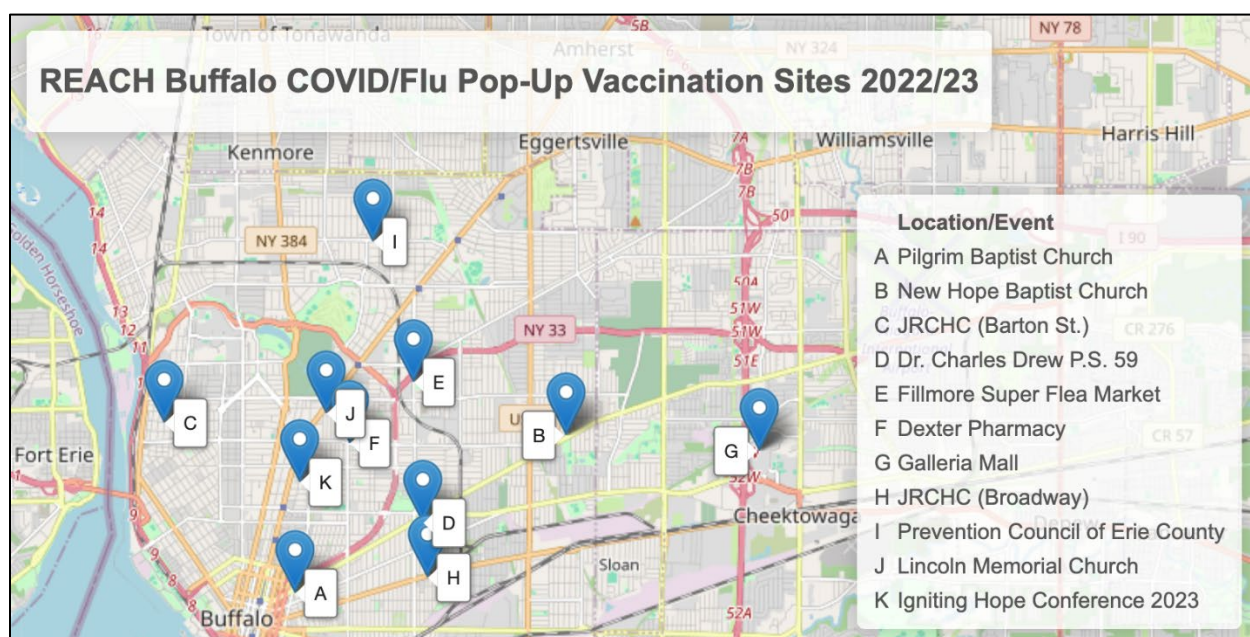


Figure 1. REACH Buffalo COVID/Flu pop-up vaccination sites during the 2022-23 performance period. Vaccines provided by CHCB, Dexter Pharmacy, ECDOH, JRCHC, and Tops Market Pharmacy.

Based on the evaluation findings, the REACH Ferry Corridor Good Health COVID-19 and Flu Initiative program effectively improved and increased vaccine awareness and uptake. The comprehensive CNA, coupled with targeted communication materials and accessible vaccination opportunities, addressed identified barriers and empowered influential messengers to promote vaccination within the community. Notably, the establishment of key partnerships with vaccination providers resulted in the successful rollout of eleven vaccination sites, increasing vaccination access in the community. Together, these efforts demonstrate REACH Buffalo COVID-19 and Flu Vaccine Initiative's role in increasing vaccine awareness, access, and uptake.