Latinos in Washington state continue to experience disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, accounting for 27% of cases while only 13% of the state's population, and more than three times the mortality rate compared with non-Hispanic whites on an age-adjusted basis. On October 13, 2021, the Latino Center for Health (LCH) at the University of Washington convened stakeholders from across the state for a virtual symposium on COVID-19 and Latino Experiences in Washington state to foster a collective understanding of the ongoing needs and areas of resilience. Speakers represented views from state regions with the highest concentration of Latino populations (see map). The following provides findings and key policy recommendations from the Barriers & Facilitators to Ongoing Vaccination Efforts Panel that aims to inform COVID recovery resource allocation and policymaking necessary to promote health equity for Latino communities in Washington.

SUMMARY

Latino communities in Washington state continue to experience disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, accounting for 27% of cases while only 13% of the state's population, and more than three times the mortality rate compared with non-Hispanic whites on an age-adjusted basis. On October 13, 2021, the Latino Center for Health (LCH) at the University of Washington convened stakeholders from across the state for a virtual symposium on COVID-19 and Latino Experiences in Washington state to foster a collective understanding of the ongoing needs and areas of resilience. Speakers represented views from state regions with the highest concentration of Latino populations (see map). The following provides findings and key policy recommendations from the Barriers & Facilitators to Ongoing Vaccination Efforts Panel that aims to inform COVID recovery resource allocation and policymaking necessary to promote health equity for Latino communities in Washington.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants identified the following key recommendations:

1. **Increase funding for community-based organizations** and trusted community leaders who are working to increase access and overcome hesitancy to COVID-19 vaccines among Latinos using culturally and linguistically tailored efforts;

2. **Shorten lead-times** and reduce administrative barriers to securing state resources for vaccination efforts;

3. **Increase funding for community health worker initiatives** in Latino communities. The funding should go to community-based organizations that currently train and coordinate community health workers; and

4. **Mandate paid sick days for all employees** (regardless of documentation status) needing time off for vaccinations and post-vaccination side-effects for themselves and their dependents.

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| POLICY BRIEF |
COVID-19 Recovery for Latinx in WA: Ongoing Support Needed for Return to School

December 13, 2021

SUMMARY
Latinos in Washington state continue to experience disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, accounting for 27% of cases while only 13% of the state’s population, and more than three times the mortality rate compared with non-Hispanic whites on an age-adjusted basis. On October 13, 2021, the Latino Center for Health (LCH) at the University of Washington convened stakeholders from across the state for a virtual symposium on COVID-19 and Latino Experiences in Washington state to foster a collective understanding of the ongoing needs and areas of resilience. Speakers represented views from state regions with the highest concentration of Latino populations (see map). The following provides findings and key policy recommendations from the Return to School Panel that aims to inform COVID recovery resource allocation and policymaking necessary to promote health equity for Latino communities in Washington.

PANELISTS: RETURN TO SCHOOL

Manuela Slye
Seattle

Erik Castillo
Quincy

Gabriela Ewing
Vancouver

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants identified the following key recommendations:

1. **Establish a statewide mental health awareness program** tailored to Latinx/e K-12 students and their families with limited English proficiency.

2. Develop and implement **culturally responsive, trauma-informed training** for all educators and school staff at publicly funded schools.

3. **Expand mandatory counseling** to grades K-8 and establish mandatory full-time, licensed mental health professional or counselor position for grades K-12.

4. **Establish navigation services and mandate language access** for families with the highest needs – English Language Learner (ELL) families and students with IEPs and 509 plans.

5. **Make long-term investments to address the academic achievement gap** exacerbated by COVID-19 among Latinx/e students.

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**SUMMARY**

Participants identified the following key recommendations:

1. **Strengthen state and county partnerships and fund local health jurisdictions** to increase access to streamlined and accurate data about mental health and mental health services on a regional scale.

2. **Fund and expand** affordable community-based mental health services accessible to Latinx communities.

3. **Create statewide culturally and linguistically relevant mental health awareness programs** to increase education about mental health among Latinos/Spanish-speaking adults with limited proficiency in English.

4. **Increase the number of multicultural, multilingual WA therapists**, psychologists, and other mental health practitioners and support the provision of telemental health services.

**MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

Panelists: Mary Jo Ybarra-Vega, MS, LMHC, and Giselle Cárcamo, MSW

Moderator: Gino Aisenberg, LCH Co-Director

A common theme in this breakout session was the urgent need to respond to gaps in knowledge regarding mental health and access to care in ways that were responsive to the linguistic, cultural and literacy needs of Latinos. Both presenters shared innovative and culturally responsive practices they implemented during the early onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Ybarra-Vega led a Promotor de Salud program conducting outreach in the Moses Lake region to educate Latino residents as well as large agricultural worker organizations in the region regarding the pandemic and its mental health impacts.

Ms. Cárcamo created a program in Spanish, Fortaleciendo Mi Mundo Interior, to address the mental health concerns and needs of women participating in justice circles throughout the state. This innovative series of interviews with Spanish-speaking psychotherapists from different countries helped women to connect with emotional strength and heal emotional wounds.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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COVID-19 Recovery for Latinx in WA: A Call for Support as Demand for Mutual Aid Rises

December 13, 2021

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PANELISTS: SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY MUTUAL AID

Edgar Franks
Burlington

Marisol Lister
Tri-Cities & Statewide

Take a look at an interactive, expanded version of this map here.

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants identified two key recommendations:

1. Increase multicultural and multilingual state programming and proactive information distribution (including emergency preparedness and response programming).

2. Increase accessibility to government funding to support mutual aid and community groups and individuals (e.g., eliminate documentation status and SSN requirements in applications for emergency funding; modify policies and procedure to increase access to funding).