



## | POLICY BRIEF

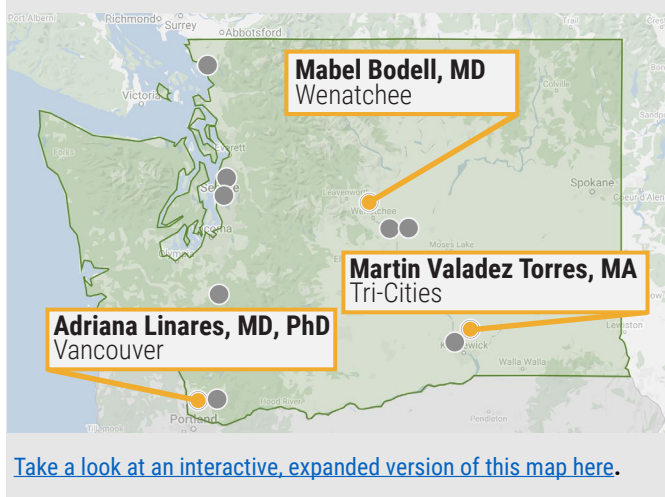
# COVID-19 Recovery for Latinx in WA: Community-Based Efforts Essential to Vaccination

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 **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.

PANELISTS: BARRIERS &amp; FACILITATORS TO VACCINATION



[Take a look at an interactive, expanded version of this map here.](#)

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## BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO ONGOING VACCINATION EFFORTS

Panelists: Dr. Mabel Bodell, Dr. Adriana Linares, Martin Valadez  
Moderator: Dr. Leo Morales, LCH Co-Director

This panel included the perspectives of leaders from north-central, south-central and south-east Washington State. All three panelists have been extensively involved in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in their communities.

All three panelists stressed the importance of **partnering with community-based organizations**. Two discussed the role of community health workers in conducting outreach to Latino communities. All three panelists have **collaborated with local radio and print media** outlets to provide information about the COVID-19 virus and/or community-based vaccination opportunities. Two panelists had also used **social media channels** including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. One panelist had partnered with local small businesses that cater to Latino consumers to offer vaccination opportunities and used \$50 gift cards to entice Latino community members to get vaccinated.

**Panelists identified a number of barriers** to vaccination including insufficient access to care and having a usual source of care. A shortage of bicultural and bilingual healthcare providers and a shortage of interpreters were also noted. Other barriers included taking time from work for vaccinations and for vaccine side effects; concerns about cost of getting vaccinated; and misinformation circulating on social media causing hesitancy.

## 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.



We all must aim to center the students themselves in our quest for educational justice.

– Manuela Slye

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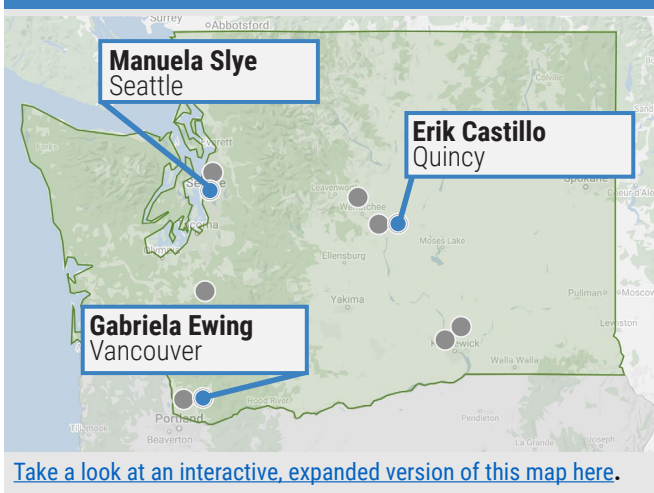
# COVID-19 Recovery for Latinx in WA: Ongoing Support Needed for Return to School

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



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## RETURN TO SCHOOL

Panelists: Erik Castillo, Gabriela Ewing, Manuela Slye

Moderator: Antoinette Angulo, LCH Policy Director

This panel presented the perspectives of Latinx/e community leaders from across Washington State (WA), including a college freshman and two immigrant mothers of school-age children.

All panelists agreed that **COVID-19 worsened pre-existing inequities in education**, particularly for those **with the highest needs – English Language Learner (ELL) families and students needing special education services**. The pandemic created new challenges for Latinx/e students including the lack of school busing, academic counseling, mental health services, and special education. **Inadequate language access** has diminished engagement with ELL families. Panelists stated that Latinx/e special education students are underserved; their Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) and 509 plans are not supported. Panelists also spoke to the **challenges Latinx/e families face in complying with COVID-19 safety protocols**, including isolation and quarantine measures at home, due to multi-generational housing and especially when they have multiple students in K-12 – increasing their exposure and quarantine orders.

All panelists insisted on the immediate need for **linguistically and culturally responsive mental health services** for students and families experiencing loss and mental health issues. The academic gap exacerbated by the pandemic is causing acute anxiety for many Latinx/e students, especially those transitioning from high school to college where academic demands are increased. Students with special needs are experiencing social isolation. Latinx/e students could benefit from efforts to support their identity safety and sense of belonging within the in-person school environment.

## 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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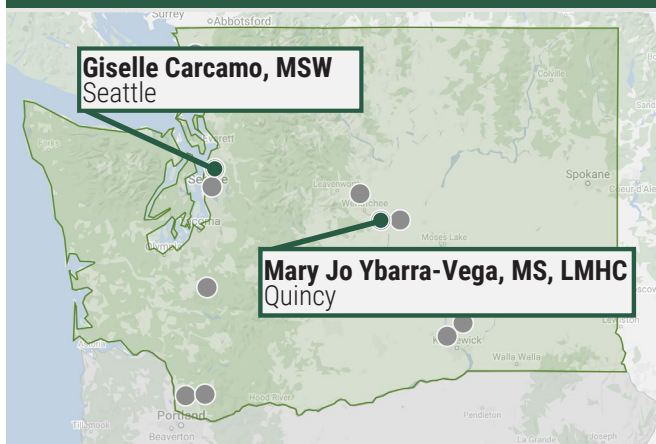
# COVID-19 Recovery for Latinx in WA: Centering Culture Vital to Mental Health

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 **Mental Health & Well-Being Panel** that aims to inform COVID recovery resource allocation and policymaking necessary to promote health equity for Latino communities in Washington.

### PANELISTS: MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING



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[WATCH THE VIRTUAL PANEL DISCUSSION](#)

## 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

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.





*It's important to invest in the people and grassroots organizations that have been on the ground for years. – Marisol Lister*

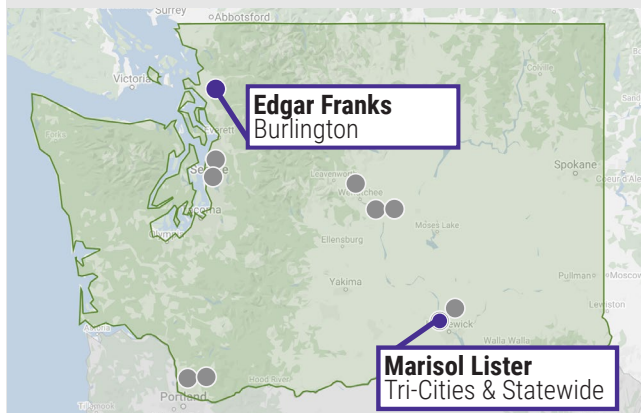
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## COVID-19 Recovery for Latinx in WA: A Call for Support as Demand for Mutual Aid Rises

December 13, 2021

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 **Successful Community Mutual Aid Efforts** panel that aims to inform COVID recovery resource allocation and policymaking necessary to promote health equity for Latino communities in Washington.

### PANELISTS: SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY MUTUAL AID



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#### SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY MUTUAL AID

Panelists: Marisol Lister, Edgar Franks

Moderator: Tomás Madrigal, WA DOH Equity Coordinator

This panel presented the perspectives from leaders involved in **mutual aid efforts – collective coordination of community to meet each other's needs**. The two leaders were from southeast and northwest (Skagit County) Washington state (WA). Both have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic response in their communities of Indigenous farmworkers and undocumented Washingtonians.

Panelists highlighted the **extensive role and importance of mutual aid in providing support for some of WA's most impacted communities during the COVID-19 pandemic**, including Latino/es, Indigenous farmworkers, and undocumented families excluded from state assistance. While panelists were leading community support efforts prior to the pandemic, they stressed the **significant increase in requests for support from community members during the pandemic**. Panelists used their limited resources to provide extensive resources to those who reached out in need, including financial and food assistance and COVID-19 information and protective equipment. One panelist's efforts resulted in the development of the community-administered **WA Immigrant Relief Fund, resulting in \$127 million in emergency cash assistance for communities in need**.

Panelists noted that **many challenges presently facing communities were pre-existing and have only been exacerbated by the pandemic**. Lack of access to state funded support and the need for **cultural and linguistic representation** across state departments were highlighted. Other challenges included inequitable allocation of state resources, lack of financial and health protections for farmworkers, and concerns about financial stability.

### 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).