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New Rapid Research Coalition Announced to Increase Local Community Involvement in an Equitable COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign

RESOLVE has joined CommuniVax, a research coalition funded by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

December 2020, Washington, DC – RESOLVE has joined [CommuniVax](#), a new research coalition to strengthen the community’s role and involvement in an equitable vaccination campaign. The coalition will conduct rapid ethnographic research related to COVID-19 vaccination among historically underserved communities of color in the United States. Local research teams will listen to community members and work with them to develop suggestions on how to strengthen COVID-19 vaccine delivery and communication strategies. The coalition will synthesize and disseminate community viewpoints to national stakeholders to develop a more equitable and effective vaccination effort, with an enduring impact on public trust.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected communities of color in the United States. Across the country, COVID-19 infection and mortality rates are highest in non-white groups, particularly Black, Indigenous, and Latino/Latinx populations. The pandemic continues to exacerbate systemic factors that drive longstanding health inequities among communities of color. The forthcoming vaccine(s) can help mitigate COVID-19 transmission and burden, but hard-hit communities must have an active role in the vaccination campaign.

“By understanding the concerns and desires of people of color and the constraints they experience, and by supporting them to take charge of their hometown’s vaccination responses, this project has the potential to increase vaccination rates and decrease the health, economic, and social effects of the pandemic,” says [Monica Schoch-Spana, PhD](#), a medical anthropologist and senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

CommuniVax is an initiative led by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Department of Anthropology at Texas State University. Together they will work with 5 local research teams, a national expert working

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group, and a network of national associations representing stakeholders on both sides of vaccination—that is, system operators and beneficiaries. Comprised of social scientists, public health authorities, and community leaders, the teams have established relationships within the communities where they will work. Teams will work in 5 sites across the United States (San Diego, CA; Southeastern Idaho; Baltimore City, MD; Prince George’s County, MD; Tuscaloosa, AL).

“Public trust is paramount to the success of the national COVID-19 vaccine program,” says Beth Weaver, a Senior Mediator with RESOLVE who is participating in the national expert working group. “The CommuniVax project is an important vehicle for understanding communities’ perspectives regarding the vaccine, enhancing dialogue, building trust, and strengthening the vaccine program – locally and nationally.”

“This project represents a timely opportunity to support community alignment around COVID-19 vaccination,” says [Emily K. Brunson, MPH, PhD](#), an associate professor of anthropology at Texas State University. “There are many longstanding issues that need to be considered in this and future public health emergencies. It is important for public health experts and practitioners to learn from—and work directly with—communities to nurture trust and build collective ownership.”

CommuniVax has received a \$2 million grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative to fund this vital research. A key partner is the Association of Immunization Managers, who represents public health professionals working in the United States and territories to prevent and control vaccine-preventable deaths in their communities.

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About RESOLVE

RESOLVE is a Washington, D.C. based non-governmental organization with more than 40 years of experience forging sustainable solutions to critical social, health, and environmental challenges by creating innovative partnerships where they are least likely and most needed. RESOLVE promotes equitable health access and outcomes for all people, communities, and populations by fostering and supporting the development of policies, strategies, and partnerships and by creating and supporting rapid response initiatives that can transform into long-term scalable solutions. For more information, visit www.resolve.ngo.

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About the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security

The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security works to protect people from epidemics and disasters and build resilient communities through innovative scholarship, engagement, and research that strengthens the organizations, systems, policies, and programs essential to preventing and responding to public health crises. The Center is part of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and is located in Baltimore, MD.