

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA**



**CIVIL + HUMAN RIGHTS AND
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City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission, Immigration Ad Hoc Committee,
*"Reaching Los Angeles City Immigrants: Response and Resources
During the COVID-19 Pandemic"* Webinar
January 28, 2021

Ad Hoc Committee Members: Irene Tovar (Committee Chair), Irma Beserra Nuñez, Anthony Mack, Melany De La Cruz-Viesca, Angelica Solis-Montero

Background: According to the US Census Bureau, 35% of the Los Angeles County population are immigrants, and 57% speak a language other than English at home. Because of immigration status, immigrant populations may not qualify for federal financial aid through COVID-19 Relief packages. Furthermore, 70% of L.A. county's immigrants have lived in L.A. for at least a decade, yet avoid using public services, like health clinics due to fears of deportation by immigration officials.

Ad Hoc Purpose: With the devastating impact the pandemic has had on immigrant communities, the Immigration Ad Hoc Committee prioritized its task to address equitable outreach to immigrant communities and those who are most impacted by COVID-19. The Immigration Ad Hoc Committee hosted a webinar along with LA Civil Rights, featuring remarks from Mayor Eric Garcetti and Councilmember Gil Cedillo and brought together a group of LA City and LA County leaders to highlight resources, programs, and educational tools that practitioners, advocates, and community leaders can access to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic on immigrant populations.

I. Reaching Los Angeles City Immigrants: Response and Resources During the COVID-19 Pandemic Webinar

In partnership with Channel 35, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the City of L.A. Housing + Community Investment Department, and the L.A. County Department of Public Health, the webinar provided an overview of the City's response and promoted available resources and programs. Moreover, the webinar offered insight into city-county coordination and provided a tutorial of how best to access services and programs at local city, county and state levels. The webinar was hosted near the time of the vaccine rollout, and offered critical details related to vaccines, as well as healthcare resources. Each of the speakers presented on a range of programs including financial support programs in addition to housing and food security programs. Speakers from the Mayor's Office offered an overview of innovative approaches

that the City is leading to reach monolingual immigrant communities and those most vulnerable to the pandemic.

- A. **Outreach Methodology:** Nearly 40% of Angelenos are foreign born with a large percentage speaking a non-English language in the household. The Immigration Ad Hoc Committee strategically outlined a targeted outreach approach to extend beyond Spanish speaking communities and include all immigrant populations, such as Asian and African immigrants. The targeted audience focused on community-based organizations and grassroots service providers who work with a wide range of immigrant populations in the neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic. Outreach efforts were coordinated with city partners, including the Mayor's Office Innovation Team, the Office of Immigrant Affairs (including 37 designated city department liaisons), the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, HCIDLA FamilySource System, and Councilmember Gil Cedillo's office. Additionally, LA Civil Rights and City partners reached out directly to faith-based organizations, Family Source Centers, Los Angeles-based Consulates, and worked with members of the Immigration Ad Hoc Committee to expand the outreach into their existing networks through personal outreach. In addition to targeted outreach methods, a broader outreach included emails, social media promotion, and a Channel 35 promotional were implemented. The Channel 35 promotional featured Councilmember Gil Cedillo, LA Civil Rights General Manager Capri Maddox, and HRC Commission President Angelica Solis-Montero which aired several days prior to the webinar. We successfully connected with over one hundred grassroots organizations serving diverse immigrant groups from the Latino, Asian, and African communities across the City.
- B. **Impact & Audience Reach:** Social media promotion prior to the event reached about 3,300 people, not including numbers from other platforms (e.g., channel 35 promotion) that we were unable to attain. The posts were also shared by others multiple times on different platforms, including Councilmember Gil Cedillo's Facebook page. For example, it was retweeted 7 times on Twitter, shared 5 times on Facebook, and reposted on Instagram (numbers unavailable due to the app's limited data collection). When the webinar went live on Facebook, it had almost 700 viewers. Since the premier, the webinar has been viewed more than 400 times on the [LA Civil Rights](#) website and YouTube. The Webinar also gained an additional 95 views after the Spanish translated transcription was posted.

II. **Recommendations:** There were challenges and successes in implementing the webinar. Based on input from members of the Immigration Ad Hoc Committee it is apparent that gaps in reaching immigrant communities continues to exacerbate the dire impact of the pandemic. Moreover, achieving racial, health, and economic equity in the City's COVID-19 response requires an ongoing and continuous outreach and engagement of immigrant populations well beyond the pandemic recovery period. The Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department is well positioned and suited in its mandate to increase equity and access for immigrant communities. As such, the following recommendations can guide the Department's on-going efforts.

- A. **Close the Language Barrier:** Invest and allocate funds to expand language accessibility to informational resources, programs and services that can bridge the divide for monolingual immigrant communities. Use of technology such as Google translate may work in some instances, but it is not as effective in capturing cultural nuances and perspectives. While we recognize that

the cost for translation materials can be a burden, use of technology in combination with partnerships with philanthropy, academic institutions, and grassroots organizations can serve as an initial step towards bridging language barriers given that information related to the pandemic is constantly changing. Moreover, partnerships with other city departments to seek federal funds for the purpose of expanding language accessibility should be explored. In order to avoid duplication of efforts, a mechanism should be developed to improve coordination and communication among cities in Los Angeles County. This would result in more opportunities for knowledge exchange, reduced costs, and efficiency.

- B. **Expand Collaborative Networks:** The City of L.A. has a robust network of community based and faith-based organizations. Internal city collaborations proved to be a successful way in expanding the reach into diverse communities. There is a value in direct partnerships with grassroots organizations and faith-based organizations as trusted cultural ambassadors, and are often the most appropriate avenue in understanding existing needs and providing resources. Additional partnerships with academic institutions is another way to leverage existing data analysis and amplify outreach methodologies that are data driven. Throughout the planning process, the Immigration Ad Hoc Committee found several neighborhoods--such as Northeast San Fernando Valley, South Los Angeles, and East Los Angeles--have disproportionately been hardest hit by the pandemic. Getting health, economic, and other recovery resources and information to these neighborhoods should continue to be a priority for Los Angeles City agencies moving forward. LA Civil Rights and the HRC should continue to work with other city departments and community partners to ensure equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of immigrant Angelenos.
- C. **Expanding Reach Into Mass Audiences:** Partnerships with ethnic, local and grassroots media outlets tend to be the most used resource for immigrant populations, particularly for monolingual immigrant enclaves. While we should continue in this best practice, it is recommended to collaborate with mass media and social media outlets. Such mass media outlets have an interest in promoting public service through programs and public announcements. According to the L.A. County Public Health Department, Latinos are dying three times the rate of white residents. Through early discussion with Telemundo, a major Spanish language television network, they expressed interest in possible collaboration with LA Civil Rights and HRC. A potential partnership with Telemundo can yield a broader reach of the Spanish speaking community with limited accessibility to social media. Using best practices from the webinar hosted by the Immigration Ad Hoc Committee, a similar format may be proposed which highlights presenters such as elected officials, LA City and LA County leaders and Spanish speaking media personalities, such as Eva Longoria, to maximize the messaging and viewership. This can serve as a model for future partnerships and programs targeting the Asian and African communities while providing an effective way to raise the profile of the Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department and Human Relations Commission, maximizing its impact on leveling the playing field and shifting the narrative of equity.