

# Binational border infectious disease surveillance COVID-19 vaccination program



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CATEGORY: Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)

To increase COVID-19 vaccination knowledge and uptake among farmworkers and seasonal workers in the California border region, the California Department of Public Health supported counties by providing vaccination clinic operations for clinics and community-based organizations and culturally relevant vaccination campaign messaging.

## The “What”

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Binational Border Infectious Disease Surveillance (BIDS) team worked with partners in Imperial County and San Diego County to enhance existing infrastructure to provide and perform COVID-19 vaccinations to at-risk populations. The project used funding from the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) cooperative agreement to perform outreach to hard-to-reach populations as recommended by the statewide vaccination strategy, focusing on priority populations of farmworkers and seasonal workers in the border region.



Farmworkers and seasonal workers experience many barriers to receiving vaccinations and need special attention for targeted messaging and additional resources to increase vaccine access. CDPH contracted with Optum Serve to provide units and staffing for community-based organizations to host COVID-19 vaccination clinics for their communities. The project also funded any site rental fees, translation services, stipends, participant gift cards and more. Optum Serve also provided additional focused COVID-19 vaccination campaigns for Imperial County informed by conducting a comprehensive environmental scan, conducting stakeholder interviews, developing personalized materials for Imperial County priority populations and distributing the material accordingly.

With these additional resources, CDPH BIDS aims to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates in the migrant population and provide proper channels to distribute appropriate COVID-19 messaging that addresses the population’s concerns. We hope that the project will incentivize hosts to hold clinics without having a burden of having to fund a clinic. By providing all the resources needed for a successful clinic, the goal is that the host can focus on its outreach to the community and ensure a successful attendance rate to the event.

The campaigns aim to reach the migrant population by placing fliers in areas of their workplace and along their transportation routes. Messaging is disseminated through the local radio stations and on billboards along the common routes of travel. The messages themselves have been developed to specifically relate to the migrant population and their family with well thought imaging and messaging provided in the Spanish language.



More stories are available at [stories.cste.org](https://stories.cste.org)

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## The “So What”

Over 20 clinics in the Imperial and San Diego areas utilized the BIDS vaccination resources, vaccinating a total of 640 individuals in 1 year. We selected specific hosts and community-based organizations to work with who had a strong connection and outreach potential to the migrant community. In return, each host has been incredibly thankful and feels supported by the resources provided, with many partnering with us multiple times throughout the year for additional COVID-19 clinics. These clinics were partnered with schools, churches, health fairs, farmworker dinners, county events, and more.



The BIDS vaccination campaign portion of this project is still ongoing. We have finalized the marketing materials and coordinated distribution planning and will hope to see the execution of the campaign materials in the community by the end of 2023. There is interest from the Imperial County Public Health Department to continue the campaigning initiatives and to have additional efforts for the more remote areas of Niland and Calipatria. The campaign messaging revolves around promotion of getting booster doses, addressing any myths regarding COVID-19 or the vaccine, and reassuring safety for vaccinations for children of farmworkers and seasonal workers.

## The “Now What”

The BIDS vaccination resource support will only continue through July 2023, and the campaigning efforts will continue into 2024.

There continues to be requests for turnkey vaccination support for 5-6 additional events in the next month. However, the counties have been able to stand up their own resources now and we are not seeing as much of a need for staffing and turnkey unit assistance. The ability to provide this resource gave support that many of these counties could not implement locally due to the pandemic.

By providing additional support, this project has given the county time to recuperate and once again support their local efforts gradually.

The BIDS team still sees a lot of potential in the campaigning efforts and hopes to continue messaging as needed in the respiratory illness season. As vaccination messaging needs change, the flexibility of this project is very accommodating to address those needs, whether it be future booster doses, addressing COVID-19 outbreaks, or raising awareness of COVID-19 policy updates.

Key contributors to this project include Esmeralda Iniguez-Stevens, California Department of Public Health