

The travelers health initiative



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CATEGORY: **Epidemiology & Laboratory Capacity (ELC)**

The Texas Department of State Health Services established the Travelers Health Initiative to assess travel history, vaccination status, and COVID-19 prevention practices among individuals who travel between Mexico and Texas. The results informed health education materials and messages intended for this population.

The “What”

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) used Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) funding to establish the Travelers Health Initiative. The goal of the initiative was to develop strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 amongst individuals who travel between Mexico and Texas by assessing travel history, vaccination status, and COVID-19 prevention practices. This approach led to the development of culturally-relevant educational materials and messaging regarding the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

The “So What”


The initiative findings aided programs in developing educational materials and other resources that were specific to the population traveling between the Mexico and Texas border. The materials focused on common themes such as reasons for travel, reasons for vaccine hesitancy, and common practices that may be more effective in the prevention of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases. Additionally, it identified sites to provide education where large numbers of this population congregate, such as specific shopping centers and local flea markets.

At project initiation, data collection was done through face-to-face survey administration. Later on, DSHS implemented electronic data collection through an online survey, eliminating extra steps, which improved efficiency and reduced human error. It also allowed for more surveys to be administered since it was faster than manually entering participant responses. With the addition of the online option, survey collection went from an average of 62 surveys per month to 317 per month.

The “Now What”

The Travelers Health Initiative has provided DSHS with valuable data about the knowledge and practices related to COVID-19 and other infectious disease among people traveling between the Mexico and Texas border. This information can be used to enhance other health promotion projects that are currently in the planning stages. This includes ensuring these efforts are culturally-relevant and reaching the intended audience.

Key contributors to this project include Elvia Ledezma, Communicable Diseases Manager; Rosy De Los Santos, Program Manager; Nellyda V. Mata, PHPSIII; Texas Department of State Health Services Public, Health Region 8, Office of Border Public Health.

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