

Increasing COVID-19 vaccine confidence and uptake among vulnerable and marginalized groups across Canada: the PHAC-funded Community Vaccination Promotion (CVP) Projects

Beginning in 2021, the Public Health Agency of Canada funded five Community Health Centre associations and their members across Canada to promote and facilitate uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination for vulnerable populations. The associations are the Canadian Association of Community Health Centres (CACHC) and four provincial associations in British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Ontario: the British Columbia Association of Community Health Centres (BCACHC), the Manitoba Association of Community Health (MACH), the Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres (NSACHC), and Ontario's Alliance for Healthier Communities (Alliance). The five associations developed a network of Community Vaccination Promotion (CVP) projects working at federal, provincial, and local levels across Canada to improve awareness and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines.

The five CVP Projects (CVP-National, CVP-BC, CVP-MB, CVP-NS, CVP-ON) have achieved significant impact in outreach, fostering community connections, creating and disseminating multilingual resources, providing direct support to clients and community members, establishing communities of practice, creating resource hubs, and documenting promising practices.

Canadian Association of Community Health Centres (CACHC)

Through the PHAC-funded CVP National project, CACHC has been working to improve COVID-19 vaccine confidence and uptake among marginalized communities across Canada. At a national level, CACHC is coordinating knowledge exchange across the five CVP projects (CVP-National, CVP-BC, CVP-MB, CVP-ON, CVP-NS) by hosting an ongoing national coordination table. CACHC has also implemented a National Knowledge Hub <https://riomix.ca/cachc> to provide vaccine-related information and resources with a goal of supporting CHCs and other partners across Canada to increase vaccine confidence across communities. The association is also conducting a national research project to identify and document promising practices at CHCs across the country focused on COVID-19 vaccine promotion and provision. In addition to these national activities, CACHC is also directly supporting on-the-ground project activities at Community Health Centres in provinces which do not currently have a provincial CHC association: AB, SK, QC, NL. Nine CHCs in these provinces have received small grants and support from CACHC to increase promotion and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines among vulnerable population groups in their local communities. Learn more about CACHC's COVID-19 project work at:

<https://www.cachc.ca/covid19>.

Scott Wolfe

Executive Director, Canadian Association of Community Health Centres

British Columbia Association of Community Health Centres (BCACHC)

The PHAC-funded CVP project has given British Columbia Association of Community Health Centres (BCACHC) the opportunity over the last 18 months to improve COVID-19 vaccine and booster confidence uptake amongst the communities across British Columbia. Individual community health centres (CHCs) were supported with evidence-based resources which

enabled practitioners and front-line workers across BC with the confidence and guidance to deliver vaccine education and support to their clients. They have been empowered to have conversations about hesitancy with clients in 15 languages, sharing materials from word search to videos. In addition, the project has shared information with members of the public through social media. The CHCs and members of the public will have access to these resources well into the future at <https://bcachc.org/vaccine-confidence/>

Valerie St.John

Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Community Health Centres

Manitoba Association of Community Health (MACH)

MACH's Community Vaccination Promotion Program has so far connected with Community Health Centres to provide resources and support to people who use drugs, people living with HIV, newcomers, and parents in tailored and flexible ways. Through summer 2022, we look forward to also reaching out to young people, folks experiencing homelessness, and those who access harm reduction programming. MACH has also proudly created VaxFactsMB.ca and [Restocking Your Vaccine Toolkit in 2022](#) in addition to [@MACHmanitoba](#) to equip those working in the diverse roles of community health to boost immunity and vaccine confidence in the communities they serve.

Carly Nicholson

Representative, Manitoba Association of Community Health

Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres (NSACHC)

Through the Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres (NSACHC), individual community health centres (CHCs) were supported with evidence-based resources and project funds, which enabled programs to be tailored to their specific communities. The goals were to increase knowledge of the COVID-19 vaccines, confidence, and trust amongst health care providers and community members and to increase overall vaccine uptake. The CHC projects focused on supporting rural communities as well as equity deserving and marginalized populations who may not otherwise access vaccines at traditional clinics within the province. The NSACHC and individual CHCs also utilized their social media platforms as an advocacy tool along with the creation of a microsite that will link to evidence-based resources to further promote trust, knowledge, and confidence in vaccinations programs.

Marie-France LeBlanc

President, Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres

Alliance for Healthier Communities (Alliance ON)

Throughout the pandemic, Alliance members and other community-centred health organizations participating in the [Community Vaccination Promotion – Ontario \(CVP-ON\) project](#) are responding to the needs of marginalized communities by providing access to a full continuum of supports, from testing and isolation supports, to essential information about vaccines, vaccination access through pop-ups and community clinics, door-to-door individualized outreach, and more for adults, children, seniors and families. These hyper-local, targeted, and innovative responses leverage and expand on relationships of trust, forge new partnerships with public health, and tailor approaches to advance vaccine confidence in communities where there are long histories of medical distrust and systemic barriers.

To share our community-led learnings, the Alliance leads a CVP-ON Community of Practice for participating Alliance members, and hosted a [Vax for the Future: Equity, Community and Trust virtual event](#). We also presented research findings in a featured poster presentation at the [Immunizing Children with Confidence, Vaccination Conversations event](#) collaboratively hosted by Children’s Healthcare Canada, Stollery Children’s Hospital and Alberta Health Services. As we enter into a second year of the CVP-ON project, Alliance members continue to build on [key enablers of successful vaccine promotion](#) by prioritizing the needs of the communities they serve, and by consistently meeting people where they are and sustaining trust that they’ve built.

Sarah Hobbs

Chief Executive Officer, Alliance for Healthier Communities

*Financial contribution from
Avec le financement de*



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