

With its mandated charge, as authorized by Section 131019.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, to provide a key leadership role to reduce health and mental health disparities to vulnerable communities, the Office of Health Equity (OHE) is on the forefront of COVID-19 response efforts to be a voice for underserved and underrepresented populations. Below is a snapshot of the work that OHE is leading or involved in.

The OHE is a major player in the CDPH Health Equity and Vulnerable Populations Workgroup, which addresses the stark health equity needs in the COVID-19 response and recovery. Staff are implementing 10 projects funded by emergency COVID-19 funding from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention to improve health outcomes for populations experiencing inequities, including strategizing to improve collection of sexual orientation and gender identity data for COVID-19 tests, cases, and deaths; providing hand-washing stations, hand sanitizer, personal protective equipment and other hygiene supplies to unhomed people in encampments; developing community-informed guidance for local health departments to ensure health equity in their Coronavirus response and recovery activities; assessing and making recommendations to assure health and safety for vulnerable workers such as immigrants and farm laborers; and supporting organizations serving the African American, Native American, immigrant, and LGBTQ communities to develop innovative culturally competent communication campaigns to reduce risks of infection and connect people to needed services, while communicating community needs and solutions to decision-makers. One staff position will be hired to lead and coordinate OHE efforts to assure that COVID-19 response and recovery activities reduce, rather than exacerbate, health inequities.

Furthermore, through OHE's innovative mental health prevention and early intervention initiative, the CA Reducing Disparities Project, funded community based organizations providing culturally and linguistically responsive services, are outreaching and engaging with African American, Asian Pacific Islander, Latino/x, LGBTQ & Native American communities to support COVID-19 emergency response efforts through education, messaging and mental health support services.