

## **OPENING REMARKS —DR. LISA WADDELL**

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### **Working Together: Partnering with Communities to Navigate Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines**

**March 25, 2021  
1:00 – 2:00pm EST**

*Opening remarks from Dr. Lisa Waddell, chief medical officer, CDC Foundation, including an overview of the foundation's work with CBOs.*

Hello. Welcome to today's webinar brought to you by the CDC Foundation. This webinar is the fifth in a series and is part of our ongoing work and commitment to support those of you in, and partnering with, community organizations to fight this pandemic.

The collective goal is to make sure the COVID-19 vaccine is not only distributed in an equitable fashion, but that work is done to assure the concerns about the vaccine are addressed, confidence is built, and shots get into the arms of all who need and want them.

Today's webinar will cover the importance of community-based organizations in the COVID-19 response; provide examples of how CBOs can support vaccination efforts, in particular those efforts tied to vaccine administration programs; and highlight examples of funding mechanisms or resources available to support CBO work.

You will hear from four organizations with extensive experience in this work including:

- an entity using a systematic approach to link local health departments and CBOs in the COVID response
- an entity that has expanded its work to include COVID mitigation and vaccine outreach
- an organization with deep knowledge and practical experience around community health workers; and
- an example of a community health worker program.

### **Building Vibrant, Healthy and Resilient Communities**

As we kick off today's webinar, I want to take just a couple of minutes to briefly highlight the CDC Foundation's work and commitment to supporting community-based organizations. This is an historic and important time in the life of our communities. It is clear that no one individual or entity can solve this pandemic nor any other complex issue impacting our communities alone. This pandemic has clearly displayed many

challenges and opportunities for improvements for multiple systems. We have seen inequities on top of inequities. And now everyone is asking “who in the community on the ground can help? Who and where are the trusted places and trusted voices?”

If there was ever a time to mobilize, support, enhance and lift up the strength, the voice and power that CBOs have, now is it.

At the foundation, our vision is to save and improve lives by unleashing the power of collaboration. CBO’s are essential partners in the work that must be done. From the very beginning of the pandemic, the CDC Foundation sprang into action, began to secure funding and immediately used those funds to support immediate and pressing needs. Supporting CBOs is not new work to the foundation; but I will say we are enhancing this work and are now ALL In.

In addition to building capacity of communities to respond to the pandemic by placing surge staff in health departments, with funding from CDC we are working to support capacity building of CBOs nationwide by:

- **Hosting this Nationwide webinar series:** this series connects CBOs nationwide to critical COVID-19 information, including featuring CDC and other leading public health experts on timely discussions, such as addressing vaccine confidence in vulnerable populations.
- **Launching a [CBO Resource Center webpage](#):** this web page provides toolkits, fact sheets, messaging and other resources focused on helping CBOs understand their critical role in the response.
- **Providing CBO technical assistance:** we are providing targeted technical assistance to CBOs as well as crucial connections between CBOs and local health departments to address community needs.
- **Providing at least 20 direct partnerships with CBOs.**
- **Seeking and securing resources to be able to fund CBOs in the future.**

As we move forward with our community- based organization and equity strategy, a key leader in this work is our first and new Chief Health Equity and Strategy Officer, Dr. Lauren Smith. Together, we have a vision of vibrant, healthy, and resilient communities. And we are committed to creating an aligned, integrated portfolio of CBO work where equity is foundational.

As all of us continue to face this pandemic and the challenge of getting the vaccine in arms in equitable ways, CBOs can help control the spread of misinformation and promote accurate information about the virus and the vaccine, and provide coordinated prevention and support services to our most vulnerable populations. However, CBOs need resources, information, and infrastructure investments to ensure they have staff and programs that are well positioned to sustain their community engagement.

We will be focusing our efforts in 4 areas: capacity building; tools and resources; strategic partnerships; and the viability and sustainability of CBOs.

We are excited and really looking forward to doing more with CBOs. And we hope that the information that you receive in this webinar will help propel us forward.

Now that you've learned more about the foundation's commitment to this work, let's move to our first panel: **Building Vaccination Capacity Through Diverse Community Partnerships.**

You will now hear from **Susan Watson**, program director of PHI's *Together Toward Health* initiative. *Together Toward Health* is doing great work, connecting local health departments and community organizations to respond to COVID-19.

Susan will be followed by **Veronica Garibay Gonzalez**, co-executive director of the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, which works closely with communities in California's Central Valley. Susan – to you now.

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