



Reflections of UpValley Family Centers' case managers regarding the impact of COVID-19

June 30, 2020

Our case managers, all Latina women with roots in the Napa Valley, have been on the front lines since the pandemic hit. Indira Lopez-Jones, Lupe Maldonado, Cristina Avina, Susana Garcia-Sanchez, and Tania Lopez recently met and spoke about their experiences.

How has the Coronavirus impacted you and your work?

- This crisis forced us to do everything differently - remotely. Some of our clients don't feel comfortable with technology so we have had to get creative and adapt how we help them. But nothing can stop us from delivering services.
- We are dealing with a lot more cases and back-to-back appointments. At the same time we have had to adjust to working from home, with our own children who need attention or family members who need help. It was hard at first to find any personal space.
- We love what we do, but as we return to our offices and work in community settings we are being cautious - we don't want to get sick or bring the sickness home.

How has the Coronavirus-response heightened disparities already present in our community?

- Many working people were left out of the federal stimulus, despite having US citizen kids and contributing to our society. The California stimulus for undocumented individuals, while a good step, was less money and harder to get.
- When COVID-19 testing first started, the message was to get tested through your health care provider - leaving our uninsured clients without any options to get tested.
- Employers, schools, and other systems started doing everything online. People with limited literacy or technology skills faced increased communication and access barriers.

How are our clients coping with the impacts of the pandemic?

- Many report an up-side -- they are spending more quality time with their family, like having dinner together.
- Our clients are resilient and taking steps to improve their situation. They are applying for work in other sectors.
- Some have a strong sense of pride and never wanted to ask for help. They realize this situation is not going away and they are becoming more open to using available resources and services.

How can our community move towards a sustainable and just recovery?

- People have a right to ask questions or ask for accommodations - related to employment, education, health, and social services.
- Preparedness is essential. Our communities have faced wildfires, power shut-offs, and now COVID-19. Families need to prepare for the unexpected.
- Local leaders need to address systemic inequities and value all people. Recovery efforts must focus on building skills, increasing access to technology, and creating living wage jobs.
- The family center is here to help!