



Immunization Program Provider Spotlight August 2023

Naugatuck Valley Health District

As the public health emergency of COVID-19 dwindled to an end, it was important to hear from the community and find the areas full of questions, confusion, misinformation, and strong opinions that still linger around immunizations. And what better way to find the perspectives of others than diving in and working hand-in-hand with the community. This is the approach the Naugatuck Valley Health District (NVHD) took when collaborating with the Connecticut Department of Public Health during the third pilot Rapid Community Assessment (RCA). This project was led by the NVHD's COVID-19 Immunization Action Plan (CAP) team, consisting of CAP Program Coordinator Nancy Serrano and Community Outreach Worker Vanessa Lopez. For their RCA, the team decided to focus on routine childhood immunizations, feeling that they would be able to capture community insights on all vaccines through these opinions. Recognizing Naugatuck's diversity, Nancy and team chose to explore key places in the community, such as the Naugatuck Public Library and the YMCA, that catered to populations with varying economic status, race, ethnicity, and backgrounds. For the data collection, Nancy and Vanessa chose to speak with people directly. "We learned the most from talking to people" Nancy said, "I try to keep it very easy like a conversation... we are trying to hear your voice and your opinions. Posing it like this is nicer and allows people to open up more and share". The goal was to use this feedback to inform strategies to communicate information to the public, increasing vaccine confidence, especially among those in underserved populations and before 'back to school' time.

The team faced challenges during the RCA, including the heat, which made it difficult to take the time outside to talk with people, and the rapid nature of the RCA made it difficult to get stakeholders together in a short period of time. To overcome this challenge, the team strove to use their time efficiently and onboard people who were going to be participating. Despite these challenges, the team saw many successes from their project. The NVHD was able to develop a stronger relationship with the Naugatuck Board of Education during their in-person meeting and share findings, ideas, and immediate solutions. "At the end of the day, when we're talking about childhood vaccines, were talking about parents" Nancy stated, "because parents are the ones that decide if their child gets it or not and that's the best pool to work with through the Board of Education."

When asked if she had any advice for others who may be starting an RCA in the future, Nancy emphasized the importance of identifying communication methods that can connect the team the quickest. For her

team, she found that texting was more efficient on days in the field versus an email. Furthermore, she suggested that team members should teach each other strategies of how to approach the public. Finally, Nancy shared that flexibility is key. “Don’t be afraid to go to different communities and ask questions.” For more information, please visit their website at www.nvhd.org.



Pictured from Left : Nancy Serrano ,Vanessa Lopez, Beatriz Allen , Savannah Prince