Kūpuna Vaccination Outreach Group: After Action Report

Ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for kūpuna in 2021.
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Kūpuna Vaccination Outreach Group

While COVID-19 has affected everyone’s lives, there are few more severely impacted than older adults (“kūpuna”), who experienced the highest rates of serious illness and death related to COVID-19.

The Hawaiʻi State Department of Health sought to address the vulnerability of kūpuna by prioritizing vaccine access through a tiered eligibility system largely based on age. While many kūpuna were able to successfully get vaccinated once eligible, many others experienced challenges that prevented or delayed vaccination. Under the leadership of the Elderly Affairs Division (“EAD”) of the City & County of Honolulu, the Hawaiʻi State Executive Office on Aging, and AARP Hawaiʻi, the Kūpuna Vaccination Outreach Group (“KVOG”) was established to support equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for kūpuna and individuals with disabilities. The EAD contracted the Hawaiʻi Public Health Institute to provide backbone support infrastructure for KVOG, as well as provide general facilitation and coordination across KVOG partners to strategically increase access to vaccination. KVOG grew into a public-private collaboration of over 50 organizations that worked together to activate partnerships, leverage trusting relationships with their networks, and quickly mobilize resources to increase vaccine access and ensure no kūpuna were left behind. As a result, 100.0% of kūpuna aged 65 and older residing in the City & County of Honolulu are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

BACKBONE SUPPORT INCLUDED:
• Establishing a comprehensive resource section.
• Engaging community stakeholders to coordinate vaccination efforts for targeted populations.
• Serving as a liaison with the DOH, Aging Network, vaccination providers, and other key community partners; coordinating meetings, committees, and other forums as needed.
• Identifying potential vaccination sites including, but not limited to senior housing properties and adult day care facilities to meet older adults where they are.
• Coordinating logistics for community-based vaccination clinics.
• Disseminating COVID-19 information.
• Working with community partners to inventory, compile, and share vaccination outreach and education resources.

The EAD served as a critical piece in activating community partners by leveraging strong, trusting relationships cultivated from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and worked together with HIPHI to support kūpuna stakeholders and COVID-19 responders to ensure every kupuna had the resources needed to access vaccination.

Multiple Communication Channels

Many KVOG organizations were trusted community members, and were heavily relied upon by kūpuna for information. Information sharing occurred across multiple communication channels. Some examples include:

- DIGITAL NEWSLETTERS, EMAILS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS
- PHONE CALLS
- DIRECT MAIL AND NEWSPAPER ADS
- RADIO AND TELEVISION
- PRINTED MATERIALS
- DIRECT KŪPUNA OUTREACH
The Kūpuna Call Center

For kūpuna who were left without critical support to register for, schedule, or otherwise access COVID-19 vaccines, the EAD stood up a call center in March 2020 in partnership with Aloha United Way and St. Francis Healthcare System ("St. Francis"). The Kūpuna Call Center was accessible to those 65 and older by simply calling 2-1-1, available 7 days a week. A team of trained call specialists provided personal assistance to kūpuna seeking vaccination support, including answering questions about COVID-19 and the vaccine, locating vaccination sites, and conducting intake for St. Francis, who would then follow-up with the kupuna within 48 hours to provide barrier reduction services like in-person visits and making arrangements to receive the vaccine.

KVOG PARTNERS WORKED TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THE KŪPUNA CALL CENTER BY INCREASING AWARENESS OF THE SERVICE AMONG THEIR NETWORKS. BETWEEN MARCH 22 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2021:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kūpuna calls answered</th>
<th>Referrals made for follow-up support</th>
<th>Calls supported by interpreters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7,800</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>30</td>
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Vaccine Barrier Reduction Services

- **REGISTRATION AND APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING**
- **LANGUAGE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION**
- **TRANSPORTATION**

On-Site Vaccination

- **ADULT DAY CARE AND ADULT DAY HEALTH SITES**
  Kūpuna who attend Adult Day Care and Adult Day Health often have chronic health conditions and significant physical or cognitive challenges, and as a result, require supervised care while their loved ones and caregivers remain in the workforce. While many kūpuna were able to successfully access vaccination on their own with the help of their family caregivers, there were a number of kūpuna who remained unvaccinated due to logistical barriers. As a result, an additional 157 kūpuna were able get vaccinated.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Eight community centers across the island leveraged their built trust and relationships with kūpuna members to connect them with vaccination support through KVOG. These centers included the Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center, Kapahulu Community Center, Mōʻiliʻili Community Center, Nā Kūpuna Makamae/Pacific Gateway Center, Pālama Settlement, Project Dana, Susannah Wesley Community Center, and Waikīkī Community Center. As a result, many staff and volunteers with regular contact with kūpuna were able to get vaccinated, and over 2,000 kūpuna gained access to vaccination.

SENIOR HOUSING PROPERTIES

Kūpuna who live in senior housing properties are often income constrained, have limited family support, and many speak English as a second language, if at all. A total of 8,414 kūpuna live in senior housing, providing for a unique opportunity to provide vaccination assistance to many kūpuna at once.

A total of 71 properties were engaged, of which 39 properties requested assistance, including on-site (e.g., pop-up vaccination clinic) and off-site services (e.g., transportation to a mass vaccination site). On-site vaccination was made possible by the collaboration of mobile providers from Kaiser Permanente, Pharmacare Hawai‘i, 5 Minute Pharmacy, Times Pharmacy, Walgreens Pharmacy, and the Queen’s Healthcare Systems. Volunteers were recruited by the City & County of Honolulu Department of Emergency Management, Hawai‘i Medical Reserve Corps, and HIPHI. Critical language access support, including in-person language interpretation and translation, was championed by Department of Health Office of Language Access and Pacific Gateway Center. A total of 28,172 touchpoints of engagement, over multiple rounds and types of outreach, were recorded.

In-Home Vaccination

Nationally, homebound individuals are more likely to suffer from chronic health conditions, have lower incomes, and be from racial minority groups. Due to their health conditions, people who are homebound are at greater risk of serious illness and complications from COVID-19. While majority of adults have many options to get vaccinated, these options often are not available to or meet the unique needs of homebound individuals; in-home vaccination resolves many these issues where other vaccination sites may fall short.

A subgroup of KVOG was convened to strategize ways to increase awareness of in-home vaccination options, conduct intake and make referrals, and provide coordination across mobile providers. As of October 23, 2021, 1,239 doses have been administered and over 725 people had been fully vaccinated, demonstrating the impact of information sharing through the KVOG network, and coordination across partners.
Lessons Learned and Recommendations

ACCESS TO TIMELY, ACCURATE INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT

- Increase availability and transparency of disaggregated surveillance data to support community-led efforts, evaluate and shift ongoing efforts as necessary, and maximize impact over time.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION MATTERS

- Provide a number of ways for kūpuna to receive timely support, including channels that do not rely on digital or broadband access.
- Carefully consider how language is used and the context in which language is used, including the way in which support services are described to the public.

INVEST IN COMMUNITY-LED EFFORTS

- Include community-based organizations (“CBOs”), as representatives of their communities, in response efforts from beginning to end. Shift power and resources to communities so that they have the capacity to ensure the health and safety of their members in ways that work best for them.
- Investments in public health infrastructure, including resourcing CBOs that are well-positioned to understand and meet community need, is critical to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergency situations. Equip CBOs with the information, tools, and resources necessary for them to effectively do what they do best: ensuring that their communities’ needs are met.

INCREASE COLLECTIVE IMPACT BY PROVIDING BACKBONE SUPPORT

- Leverage the momentum of KVOG and other collaborative kūpuna efforts to support long-term COVID-19 response and recovery, and erect systems in place to be able to activate partnerships quickly in the future should another emergency situation occur.

SEEK TO ADDRESS MULTIPLE INTERCONNECTED DRIVERS OF HEALTH

- Though COVID-19 vaccination was free of charge, there were many other drivers of health inequity that affected vaccine access, particularly among underserved populations. This emphasizes the importance of addressing social determinants of health, and demonstrates that our communities are only as healthy and safe as our most disparate members.

“KVOG became a safe place for aging advocates to express concerns regarding vaccination access by elders, to have our concerns heard and validated, and to work as a group to find appropriate solutions that kept our kupuna safe - and got them vaccinated!”

- Diane Terada | Division Administrator
  Catholic Charities Hawaiʻi

“KVOG has been the perfect intersection of government agencies, healthcare providers, nonprofit advocacy groups and social service organizations. We have been able to fill gaps in our community by working together so that no vulnerable kupuna falls through the cracks while being mindful of each organization’s services and contribution in the process. It has been rewarding to experience the power of collaboration and to know that the partnerships we have formed will continue beyond the pandemic.”

- Melissa Ah Ho-Mauga | VP Client Services
  St. Francis Healthcare System
**Mahalo**

While there were many barriers that threatened vaccine access for kūpuna, KVOG as a collective was committed to working every day to ensure that kūpuna, as the backbone of our communities, were supported and not left behind. Mahalo to our KVOG members for being exemplary community servants and creating a safer Hawai‘i for people of all ages.

It is also important to note that KVOG would not be in existence without the significant contributions of kūpuna to our communities and to the organizations KVOG represent. The perseverance and resilience of kūpuna throughout the COVID-19 pandemic should be noted. To all of our kūpuna: mahalo piha for your leadership.

AARP Hawai‘i
Active Aging Consorium Asia Pacific
Alzheimer’s Association of Hawai‘i
Aloha United Way
Catholic Charities Hawai‘i
Catholic Charities Hawai‘i – Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center
COVID PAU (Hawai‘i COVID-19 Collaborative)
City & County of Honolulu
Department of Health – Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division
Department of Health – Contract Tracing Team
Department of Health – Disability and Communication Access Board
Department of Health – Executive Office on Aging
Department of Health – Olomana Loomis ISC (contractor)
Department of Health – Public Health Nursing Branch
Department of Health – ReadyZoneHQ (contractor)
Department of Health – State Laboratories Division
Department of Human Services
Faith Action for Community Equity
FilCom CARES
Generations Magazine
Hā Kūpuna National Resource Center for Native Hawaiian Elders
Hale Hau‘oli Hawai‘i
Hawai‘i Meals on Wheels
Hawai‘i Pacific Gerontological Society
Hawai‘i Primary Care Association
Healthcare Association of Hawai‘i
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies
InterAgency Council for Immigrant and Refugee Services
Kaiser Permanente
Kaua‘i County – Agency on Elderly Affairs
Ke Kula No Nā Po‘e Hawai‘i
Kōkua Council
Lanakila Pacific
Language Access Advisory Council
Marshallese Community Organization of Hawai‘i
Nā Pu‘u‘uai
Our Kūpuna
Pacific Gateway Center
Pacific Government Solutions
Papa Ola Lōkahi
Partners in Development Foundation
Project Dana
Project Vision
St. Francis Healthcare System of Hawai‘i
The Trust for Public Land
The Queen’s Health Systems – Native Hawaiian Health
The Queen’s Medical Center
University of Hawai‘i – Health Careers Opportunity Program
University of Hawai‘i – John A. Burns School of Medicine, Department of Geriatric Medicine
University of Hawai‘i – Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Honolulu Field Office
We Are Oceania