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## **Houston Nonprofit Tackles Racial Disparities Linked to COVID-19**

Día de la Mujer Latina Launches Groundbreaking Telehealth Program to Link Community Health Workers/Promotores with Communities Hit Hardest by COVID 19

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**23, April, Houston, TX:** On April 6, Dia de la Mujer Latina (DML) and the Intercultural Center for Health Research and Wellness launched the Telehealth Community Navigation Certification Training Program for Promotores and Community Health Workers (CHW), to address health disparities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Once again, DML has launched a program that supports our communities and makes information available to us to stay healthy,” said Dr. Jane L. Delgado, President, and Executive Director of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health (the Alliance), the nation's leading group advocating for Hispanic/Latino health.

Since 1997, DML’s mission has focused on bringing health screenings for early detection of cancer and other chronic and infectious diseases at its national and statewide health fiestas conducted by DML’s trained and certified Promotores/Community Health Workers. When a pandemic looked imminent, DML moved quickly to train these CHWs to prepare and protect their communities against the virus and associated disruptions.

On February 12<sup>th</sup> — weeks before Houston announced school closures — DML presented its bilingual training on Dispelling Myths and Rumors about COVID 19 to the Texas Dept of State Health Services for approval.

“We were worried that this virus would disproportionately hit the Latino community in Texas,” said DML director Venus Ginés. “We knew we needed to do something quickly.”

Some of those fears have already been borne out. According to Ginés, many Latinos are afraid to go for COVID tests or seek care mainly due to the mistrust they have with government agencies. Promotores/Community Health Workers, however, are trusted members of their communities and have extensive training in how to overcome fear and mistrust — so that they can connect people to the care, services, and information they need to stay healthy.

DML implemented a soft launch of the Telehealth Community Navigation Program during Holy Week as a medium to address the bio-psycho-social and environmental determinants of health that confront the Latino community in Texas.



Starting with its database of over 5000 clients from its previous health fiestas, DML prepared and trained its team of Promotores/CHWs to make personalized wellness calls, assuring the Latino community that DML is committed to be a resource and a voice for them.

“We live in unprecedented times and the well-being of mind, body and spirit is essential for general health,” Ginés says. “That’s why the trained Telehealth Community Navigators ask about the person’s basic health and wellness needs first, as well as the spiritual needs.”

“In addition to the Latino community, the African American community experience many of the same legitimate fears of government and healthcare systems and treatments”, as shared by Dr. Tim Akers, Professor of Public Health and Assistant Vice President for Research Innovation and Advocacy at Morgan State University, a Historically Black College and University in Baltimore, Maryland. It can also be tailored for all the community/faith-based dedicated volunteers as well.

DML appreciates the support of T-Mobile in setting up a hotline 713-277-5444 to help all who have specific issues and needs to speak with one of the Telehealth Community Navigators. DML is also planning to implement Telehealth Community Navigator training in other areas of the United States with a focus on COVID-19 and other emerging infectious diseases, as well as behavioral health.

*For more information, please contact Venus Ginés at [chwcovid@gmail.com](mailto:chwcovid@gmail.com), or visit DML’s website, [www.diadelamujerlatina.org](http://www.diadelamujerlatina.org).*

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