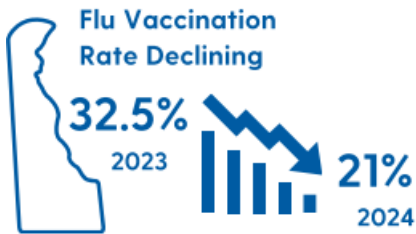


The Extension Collaborative on Immunization and Teaching Engagement (EXCITE)

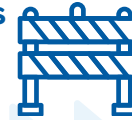
RELEVANCE Underserved populations in Kent and Sussex counties have lower vaccination rates and face barriers such as vaccine hesitancy, health literacy challenges, and limited access to healthcare.



Kent and Sussex Counties Underserved Populations

Barriers

- Vaccine hesitancy
- Health literacy challenges
- Limited access to healthcare.



Needs:

- Increase vaccination education
- Improve communication strategies among healthcare professionals and community workers to enhance vaccine uptake in these vulnerable populations.

RESPONSE This program was offered internally to the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) team as well as externally to Community Health Workers (CHWs) through the Community Health Workers Association of Delaware.



Developed and implemented training

- Improve communication
- Promote vaccine education



Includes learning for both CHWs and EFNEP paraprofessionals

- Didactic
- Practice-based



Trainings Included:

- Behavior change strategies
- Motivational interviewing
- Communication techniques tailored to vaccine education.
- Virtual training sessions

Promoted the **Bridge Access Program** to improve vaccine access within underserved communities while the program was available to the public.

RESULTS These trainings have significantly **improved** the **communication skills** and **confidence** of CHWs and EFNEP paraprofessionals.



Post-training surveys

95% Felt more confident interacting with the community, particularly in addressing vaccine hesitancy.

The program's ongoing research and evaluation will identify key themes and outcomes, with the goal of building a more health-literate and vaccine-informed Delaware.



Practice-Based Sessions

Allowed participants to apply behavior change strategies in real-life scenarios, contributing to their professional development.

RELEVANCE

Delaware is facing declining flu vaccination rates, with 21% of the population vaccinated in 2024 compared to 32.5% in 2023, according to Delaware's My Healthy Communities Dashboard. COVID-19 vaccination rates also show moderate success, with 66.7% fully vaccinated, but updated seasonal (August 2024–November 2024) vaccine uptake remains low at 10.7%. Underserved populations in Kent and Sussex counties have lower vaccination rates and face barriers such as vaccine hesitancy, health literacy challenges, and limited access to healthcare. There is a pressing need to increase vaccination education and improve communication strategies among healthcare professionals and community workers to enhance vaccine uptake in these vulnerable populations.

RESPONSE

The University of Delaware Cooperative Extension developed and implemented training to improve communication and promote vaccine education. This program was offered internally to the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) team as well as externally to Community Health Workers (CHWs) through the Community Health Workers Association of Delaware. The training program uses a combination of didactic and practice-based learning for both CHWs and EFNEP paraprofessionals. These trainings include behavior change strategies, motivational interviewing, and communication techniques tailored to vaccine education. Virtual training sessions, facilitated by Extension employees and National Board-Certified Health and Wellness Coaches, incorporate role-playing scenarios utilizing UD's Healthcare Theatre to provide participants with real-world practice. Additionally, the training program promoted the Bridge Access Program to improve vaccine access within underserved communities while the program was available to the public.

RESULTS

These trainings have significantly improved the communication skills and confidence of CHWs and EFNEP paraprofessionals. Current post-training surveys show 95% of participants felt more confident interacting with the community, particularly in addressing vaccine hesitancy. The practice-based sessions allowed participants to apply behavior change strategies in real-life scenarios, contributing to their professional development. The program's ongoing research and evaluation will identify key themes and outcomes, with the goal of building a more health-literate and vaccine-informed Delaware.

RECOGNITION

The Extension Collaborative on Immunization and Teaching Engagement (EXCITE) initiative is funded through the Extension Foundation, the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Partnerships for this project include: Delaware Division of Public Health and Community Health Workers Association of Delaware.

PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT

By engaging vulnerable populations through both CHWs and EFNEP professionals, the initiative is expected to bridge healthcare access gaps, increasing the vaccination rate throughout Delaware.