

COVID-19 Recommendations

Arizona African American Virtual Town Hall

Sponsored by the Mayo Clinic Center for Health Equity and Community Engagement Research in partnership with the Arizona Commission of African American Affairs
April 28, 2020

Strategic recommendations for COVID-19 outreach, policy and research include the following:

1. Researchers should collect and disseminate more-complete data regarding the true incidence and mortality of COVID-19 in Arizona residents of African descent (African American, Afro-Caribbean, African and the like). The current lack of consistent racial-ethnic data collection for those affected by and dying of the disease calls into question the validity of reported data, which is not consistent with data from other parts of the United States.
2. Greater coordination with the Arizona Commission on African American Affairs is needed to devise strategies for disseminating information on COVID-19 deep into the black community. Directing people to the Arizona Department of Health Services website is only one means of information dissemination and should not be relied upon as the primary means of communication.
3. State leadership should make specific efforts to dialogue with the black community regarding the health-related, psychosocial and economic impacts of COVID-19 and should listen to community concerns. Of note, an invitation was sent to the Arizona Department of Health Services to participate in a recent town hall but was declined. Although the workload of state health officials is high, they need to have specific discussions with members of the community in collaboration with trusted community partners such as the commission, faith-based organizations and others.
4. Town hall participants and sponsors are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on children. More-comprehensive data about the impact on children of color within Arizona need to be collected and disseminated.
5. A targeted, culturally appropriate public health campaign to increase knowledge about COVID-19 should be developed and prioritized. Information gaps include:
 - Signs and symptoms
 - Self-protection and mitigation strategies such as social distancing, hand-washing and proper use of masks
 - Myths and facts about treatment
 - Risks to people with preexisting illnesses, who are more prevalent in the black population

Public health officials should consider engaging a health epidemiologist with experience in minority communities to assist in the development of this campaign.

6. Information about COVID-19 tests and testing availability should be more widely disseminated to provide black residents of Arizona a chance to be tested if desired. Testing should be made available in neighborhoods or places where high concentrations of black residents live or visit, such as churches and community centers. Explicit information about what to do in response to a positive test result should accompany the testing.
7. Black physicians and other health care providers should be surveyed to better understand their experiences and the challenges of providing care to underrepresented populations, including black residents of Arizona.