

## Resilient American Communities (RAC) COVID-19 Initiative Overview

**What is the RAC?** The Resilient American Communities (RAC) COVID Initiative is a civil society driven public-private consortium. It supports communities in their efforts to prevent and manage the risks of COVID. RAC efforts are particularly focused on increasing social equity within historically disenfranchised populations, to engage local solutions addressing menacing challenges that threaten their health and prosperity.

RAC is built around agile, collaborative networks of local individuals and organizations. Participants strengthen communities by working together to withstand assaults on their survival, ability to thrive with resilience and regeneration. RAC spotlights and engages all citizens, especially the underserved and vulnerable who have struggled to generate sufficient capacities and resources to improve their conditions. It seeks to converge community input on the unique problems they face, enabling collaboration within community to build local solutions.

RAC's nationally-recognized expertise helps fortify transformative community solutions. It addresses the challenges of emergent diseases (e.g., COVID-19), community disaster management, environmental justice, resilience and transformation. RAC's data collection, communication resources and collaborative community-building methods help communities respond to COVID-19 and the life-altering syndemic effects associated with it.

**What does RAC do?** RAC provides frameworks upon which a community builds resilience from within and in ways that equitably sustain and enrich all people. In the words of coordinator Jan Booher, "RAC helps move people from despair and fear, into hope and action."

RAC provides a set of adaptable tested tools, methods, content, and guidance to respond to people affected by COVID-19. The RAC model is designed to be used in collaboration with public health and primary health care efforts including local health centers, health systems, and social services as they address historical inequities in health care access and quality long plaguing racial minorities, rural populations, and the poor.

RAC painstakingly works to flatten the hills and valleys of infectious disease, community uncertainty and distrust by focusing on hyper-local data and fortifying local responses. It relies on networks of willing, trusted partners, culturally appropriate messages, distribution channels, services, and rapid responses to local needs. Simultaneously, RAC reaches far beyond the immediate community-led disaster response, to enable community rebirth and renewal in sustainable ways.

RAC contributions are designed to enhance local resilience, while strengthening key roles, and connections among community organizations as well as regional, state and national partners.

Through compelling life stories, measurements and community leadership, RAC bolsters the well-being and belief that every person belongs to and is valued in their community as much as anyone else. RAC intends to turn invisible communities into invincible ones.

**Why?** Rates of COVID-19 and related deaths in the U.S. are rapidly accelerating, especially across historically vulnerable and disenfranchised groups. Government and community resources are stretched, hospitals overwhelmed, and while vaccines are generally available, distribution is still lacking in many communities, especially when it is slowed by misinformation, mistrust, and logistical challenges. The RAC enables communities to respond now, while building the basis for health equity for all. As stated by the U.S. Surgeon General, “community health and prosperity are inextricably linked.”

**How is the RAC structured?** RAC harnesses the power of willing participants from the ground level up. Networks of engaged community organizations and partners catalyze one or more community-led organizations to activate the RAC process within their community. Each RAC site is supported by tested tools and methods. Contributions of trusted partners within the community co-create, customize and localize information on COVID-19 spread, as well as available and local resources. RAC sites support hyper-local, cultural and generationally appropriate messages, messengers and distribution systems. RAC sites link into city, state, or regional resilience networks and systems for co-creation, mutual sharing and support. All participants are encouraged to engage in national RAC workgroups, trainings, and meetings.

**How is the RAC supported?** The RAC leverages the time and effort of community organizations and public/private partners. It is part of a mosaic of nationwide efforts to build community resilience <<https://us.resiliencesystem.org>>. All core RAC tools, methods, content and system elements are provided *without charge to RAC members*, and are available online <<http://resilientamericancommunities.org/>>. A key tool within RAC offerings: the Medical and Public Health Information Sharing Environment (MPHISE) was developed in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It enables easy access and information sharing about a wide range of external threats that need the collective engagement of medical and public health professionals and organizations. MPHISE is now organized to incorporate and support resilient American communities networks.

**How can I become part of the RAC Network?** We welcome new RAC members! Please visit our webpage at <http://resilientamericancommunities.org/> to learn more, identify a RAC near you, or how you can join with others to transform your community into a resilient American community.