



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Morongo Basin Healthcare District's mission is to improve the health and wellness of the communities it serves, thereby fulfilling the vision of a healthy Morongo Basin. The District has engaged the community in the following ways:

- **COMMUNITY HEALTH AND RESOURCE FAIRS.** Twice a year, (May and October) the District hosts a health fair in collaboration with the City of 29 Palms, (at the east end of the Basin), and with the Town of Yucca Valley (at the west end). Agencies, organizations and local businesses who are healthcare related or who provide resources to the community are invited to participate. Attendance over the years has averaged about 300 at each event. Offerings include free health screenings and resources covering primary care, behavioral health support, the Hi-Desert



Medical Center, San Bernardino County Adult & Child Services, Unity Home, Kiwanis Club, the regional blood bank and more give a wide variety of resources in one place.

- **INSURANCE ENROLLMENT ASSISTANCE.** The healthcare District employs a certified enrollment counselor to assist residents with understanding and applying for Covered California insurance plans, as well as Medi-Cal and Cal-Fresh benefits. She attends many community events and meetings to promote this free service to the community.
- **HIV OUTREACH.** The Morongo Basin Community Health Center's HIV Outreach Nurse presents HIV education to community organizations and agencies, speaking to the importance of HIV testing. The virus can be unknowingly shared with another but lay dormant for up to 10 years, thereby expanding exposure. Knowing your HIV status is critical to one's health. Through a grant, free HIV test kits are distributed at these presentations and at community events. The District negotiated with the local billboard company to promote the "Get Tested Morongo Basin" campaign on the primary highway through the Basin.
- **PARTNERSHIP WITH MORONGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.** The District has partnered with the local school district to provide resources and services to students.
 - School-based dental care. The Community Health Center dental team provides onsite dental services to students, coordinating with the individual schools for scheduling.
 - Immunization clinics. Back-to-School immunizations are scheduled and promoted by the school district.
 - Anti-vaping campaign. District staff worked with the school-district to launch an anti-vaping campaign targeting high school students. The District supported the effort through a digital campaign targeting 26,000 adults.



- **FOOD INSECURITY.** During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting self-quarantine and closure of non-essential businesses, the Board of Directors allocated \$500,000 for the distribution of food to Morongo Basin residents. According to the 2020 census, 19.5% of Morongo Basin residents live at or below 100% of the federal poverty level and 48.8% live below 200% of the poverty level. With the onset of schools and businesses closing for the quarantine, food insecurity became a broader threat. Staff purchased and packaged food for monthly distributions in Yucca Valley and 29 Palms. Additionally, a one-time distribution of monies was given to local food banks to bolster their food supply to needy residents. On average, 500 boxes of food were distributed to residents at these monthly events for six months during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The District coordinated with FIND Food Bank to make food more readily available in the Basin, providing them distribution space on the District's Yucca Valley campus so local food agencies can pick up supplies in Yucca Valley rather than making the 180-mile round trip to Indio for supplies.



The Community Health Center screens patients for food insecurity and provides immediate relief with bags of healthy food for food-insecure patients at the conclusion of their visit. Diagnostic questions are used during the screening which is then shared with the San Bernardino County Public Health Department in their programs to reduce food insecurity. The District has trained navigators to

assist patients to enroll in the Cal-Fresh (food stamp) program.

The healthcare District maintains a list of local food agencies within the Morongo Basin on its website.



- **IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE.** The District has a mobile medical/dental unit that functions as a mobile clinic. It is deployed for school-based dental care, back-to-school immunization clinics, and community events. In 2022, the unit was deployed once a week to



Joshua Tree to provide general medical care to adults (Joshua Tree is located mid-valley between 29 Palms and Yucca Valley). During the COVID pandemic, it served as a beacon for free vaccinations as it traveled throughout the District.