

April 16, 2020

Covid 19 Check In Call Report

March 23 to April 2, 2020

CHEER community health workers, empowerment and leadership development team members, and volunteers have been doing check in calls among all those we work with primarily in the Long Branch and Takoma Park. Calls were made in English, Spanish, and Amharic during the period of March 23 to April 2. We recorded 56 responses. Our questions were open ended, so that individuals could say what they wanted to CHEER staff that they already knew and trusted, so that responses could be honest and open. A single primary response was recorded for each participant for each question. All call participants were offered information on covid 19 safety and resources that may address their needs. Four were referred to food distribution sources.

Our first question was how people are doing? The majority (57%) had positive responses, such as “good,” “fine,” or “hopeful.” Many (43%) said they were “worried,” “afraid” or “sad.” Our next question was more specific about how they had been affected by the covid 19 pandemic. The vast majority (71%) said they had been negatively affected. About half (48%) said they had suffered employment/income loss through being laid off, or reduced hours of work. Others focused on the disruption to their lives that leads to feeling overwhelmed. This includes in many cases the problem of having children at home and nothing to do. A minority (29%) said they had not been negatively affected. This is primarily because they and their children have been able to adapt by working/ studying at home. A few said they have been positively affected by having more time to spend with the family and volunteering.

Our third question was about unmet needs. Almost half (45%) indicated that they were experiencing financial needs, especially in paying rent. About 16% indicated that their unmet need was their worries about getting sick or the uncertainty of the future. A smaller number (5%) indicated other needs

about providing for children's needs. About a third (34%) said they had no unmet needs or did not answer this question. There was also a related question about how many had been getting support or receiving services. About half (48%) said they , (36%) said they had received support (including from friends and neighbors) and 16% did not answer this question. Some immigrant participants stated that they were not seeking support because of their concerns about the "public charge rule" that penalizes immigrants seeking to change their immigration status, if they receive food stamps, Medicaid, or other government support.

The final question was about help they were able to give to others. This is an important indicator of people's sense of well-being and perception of their own capacity. Those who may be experiencing hardships that can still see ways to help others are demonstrating a positive attitude that is associated with resilience. Most (59%) said they can help others, while one third (33%) said they were not able to offer any help. 8% did not answer the question.

Based on the results from these calls it appears that the financial burdens due to income and employment loss is the biggest concern for those that CHEER works with in the Long Branch and Takoma Park communities. There are many other concerns that exist and that can be anticipated. One that was expressed was about the difficulty of providing for education to children at home with only online support from the schools. Another concern was that of being confined in small spaces with children and whole families for long periods of time.

CHEER will be doing follow up calls going forward to see what new needs emerge, share information on resources, and make referrals as warranted.