



# The Effects of COVID-19 Restrictions and Community-Based Participatory Research, Delays in Project Self Recruitment

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## Introduction

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) consists of collaborative interventions that involve scientific researchers and community members to improve the health and well-being of a community and its members.<sup>4,5</sup>

Project Self is a CBPR study with the overall goal to improve the cervical screening uptake rates among Hispanic and African American women living in Houston, Texas.

Since 2019, openness and equitability of CBPR approaches have been reduced or lost within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

## Background

The primary objective of Project Self is to examine the feasibility of conducting an education intervention trial regarding cervical cancer screening among women of Hispanic and African American origin living in public housing units in Houston, Texas.


According to the protocol, this CBPR study proposed to complete all recruitment/enrollment and data collection efforts in-person at the participating Houston Housing Association (HHA) housing sites (Fulton and Irvinton Village); which became a barrier with the onset of COVID-19 and the institutional and housing site restrictions.


## Objectives

Learn about the barriers faced by MD Anderson faculty/staff related to COVID-19 pandemic and mandates put in place regarding community-based participatory research procedures.

Discuss community engagement strategies to enhance community-based participatory research (Project Self) during COVID-19 restrictions.

## Method: MD Anderson Staff

 **Literature Reviews** about community-based participatory research engagement strategies to enhance CBPR

 **In-dept Interview** with MDA Staff to learn more about MDA COVID-19 mandates related to community activities.

## The Challenges of CBPR During COVID-19

“MDA eased restrictions in November/December of 2021, everything shut down as far as community activity...”

“When the Omicron variant came out, MDA shut community activity back down..”

**Lora Shea, Manager, Community Alliances**

“Houston Housing Authority staff as well as our team, were so excited to be able to meet again in person, but it was short-lived, once all community-based activities had to come to a halt...”

**Loren Bryant, Program Manager, Project Self**

## Shaping CBPR Around Our Newfound Reality

“We began to pick up the phone, emailing our partnering community organizations during Spring of 2021.”

**Lora Shea, Manager, Community Alliances**

“We started having bi-weekly meetings with HHA staff to check-in with each other, share institutional/organizational COVID-19 restriction updates, discuss the potential start dates of upcoming community events, residents' access to Wi-Fi, etc...”

“We revised our protocols to implement virtual data collection procedures and providing devices (tablets with Wi-Fi) to study participants who needed them...”

**Loren Bryant, Program Manager, Project Self**



Picture: Summer Interns at Irvinton Village during a community event (6/2022).



Picture: Summer Interns at Irvinton Village before a community event, stuffing newsletters (6/2022).



Picture: Dr. Shastri and Research Team at Irvinton Village before COVID-19 pandemic.

## Next Steps

- Continue to implement Project Self recruitment/enrollment procedures at Fulton and Irvinton Village.
- Stay engaged with the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) staff and housing site Resident Council members, housing staff and residents through upcoming community events.

## Community Engagement



Host “Lunch & Learns” to educate housing residents on ways to reduce their risk for cancers.



Attend “Back to School” Community Events to promote Project Self and other CBPR studies.



Attend Resident Council Meetings at the Housing Site Community Centers

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