

East York/Don Valley (EYDV) VACCINE ENGAGEMENT PROJECT Impact Report



2021 – 2023



Access Alliance
Multicultural Health and Community Services

New Beginnings for Newcomers.

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Through our community health ambassadors, we were able to create deeper connections to our equity-deserving neighbourhoods. They helped us understand what our residents needed to stay safe, improve access to testing and vaccines, and support people and their families through COVID. They built the bridges we needed to reach out to every pocket of East Toronto and we are deeply grateful for their efforts. EHP is looking forward to continuing our partnership with the community health ambassadors . . .

Anne Wojtak
LEAD, EAST TORONTO
HEALTH PARTNERS



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As Councillor, I have been very proud to support Access Alliance on the many ways they have made a difference during the pandemic. From distributing masks and hosting and supporting vaccine clinics throughout our community, to providing essential services to residents, their impact has been felt by countless residents. Despite the challenges faced for nearly three years, Access Alliance responded with resilience and positivity. Thanks to their hard work, low income, vulnerable, non-insured, and senior residents of our community have been prioritized and supported. The dedication of the Access Alliance team is truly remarkable – we are incredibly lucky to have their services and dedication here in the East End.

Brad Bradford
COUNCILLOR,
CITY OF TORONTO



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Our Vaccine Engagement Teams have helped Toronto achieve world-leading vaccination rates and are a key part of our overall Team Toronto effort to confront COVID-19 . . . Thank you to all community agencies and ambassadors for making a tremendous difference in your communities.

John Tory
FORMER MAYOR, CITY OF TORONTO

A coordinated response to COVID-19: *The Vaccine Engagement Project*

In the city-wide effort of boosting the vaccine rate of priority neighborhoods, the East York and Don Valley (EYDV) consortium was exemplary of such massive and efficient collaborations. Access Alliance was privileged to lead the EYDV Vaccine Engagement Project from April 2021 - March 2023. We are extremely thankful to the partner organizations for their genuine collaboration and contribution to saving people's lives and building a safer community through the successful implementation of the project.

Taylor Massey-Oakridge-Victoria Village was one of the least vaccinated neighbourhoods during the summer/fall of 2021. With a coordinated effort between the partners, we raised the vaccination rate above the City's average and significantly reduced the COVID-19 hospitalization rates during the pandemic peak.

The pandemic brought unforeseen circumstances and many challenges, especially to marginalized and equity-seeking populations in accessing COVID-19 vaccines and other community services. We commend our community health ambassadors (CHAs) who, throughout the pandemic, played a valiant role in facilitating a wider range of community engagement initiatives to address those barriers.

The CHA model provided skill-building and growth opportunities to the ambassadors, which in turn contributes to building a stronger community. The successes of the CHA model can be replicated as an effective community engagement strategy. In addition, the partnership structure has proven a successful model, which we can build on to address other emerging community issues in the future. We sincerely thank the City of Toronto for the project's funding and overall coordination support.

Rejwan Karim

DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT,
ACCESS ALLIANCE



EYDV Consortium Partnerships & Collaborations

OUR PARTNERS:



Toronto
Community
Housing



THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
ORGANIZATION



Community Services
CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
NEIGHBOURHOOD LINK
ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY HOUSE



Opportunity made here.



Afghan Women's Organization
Refugee & Immigrant Services



OUR COLLABORATORS:



TORONTO EAST
HEALTH NETWORK



[TCH] is grateful for the tremendous support we received from partner agencies and their dedicated ambassadors throughout the pandemic. . . We look forward to our continued collaborations with all the partners.

Kathy Hoover

HEALTH PROMOTION OFFICER, TORONTO
COMMUNITY HOUSING (TCH)



VET is an example of an immensely successful partnership. It did not only attain a safe community in the communities that we are currently residing in but also preserved life-long friendships that are hard to achieve.

Nasima Akhter

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BANGLADESHI
COMMUNITY SERVICES (BCS)



Since we were tight knit in our agenda, we were able to deliver vaccine-related information in a timely manner, address myths and questions around the vaccines and most importantly built personal relationships with the community members to leave a larger impact.

Karma S. Lhamo

MANAGER, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SPECIAL PROJECTS, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ORGANIZATION

Increased Vaccine Confidence, Access & Equity



The **RioMix service** provided residents with translated documents, including:

- COVID-19 infection/transmission information
- COVID-19 vaccine information
- At-home PCR and Rapid-Antigen Test information,
- Mobile vaccination clinic information

With the help of our Ambassadors—who speak a variety of languages including Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Patois, Spanish, Albanian, and Bengali—unofficial **translation/interpretation** was provided for clients and community members visiting hyper-local/mass mobile vaccination clinic sites.



We offered residents **transportation supports**, including Presto cards (loaded with 2 adult fares) and Uber vouchers (\$15, \$25, \$50) for rides. These helped to get residents to and from COVID-19 vaccination clinics. These supports were used throughout the pandemic while COVID-19 vaccination clinics were located across the city.



Ambassadors supported community members with **vaccine booking assistance**, booking appointments over the phone and in-person both door-to-door, and in community spaces. Ambassadors also assisted community members without health cards to access their vaccine certificates.

The success of our pandemic response program and vaccine engagement project is a testament to the power of effective partnership, including the invaluable contributions of our community health ambassadors. . . their dedication and hard work have been instrumental in improving public health outcomes for all.

Mohammad Hotak
SENIOR MANAGER NEWCOMER WELLNESS/TWLIP, WOODGREEN COMMUNITY SERVICES

Hyper-Local Clinics

These **barrier-free and accessible** clinics were made available to residents of Taylor Massey, Oakridge and Victoria Village.

When the vaccine was newly available, vaccination clinics were sparse and scattered across the city. Hyper-local clinics were **essential for improved access to vaccinations**. Held in residential buildings, community centres, schools, and food banks, these clinics ensured that vaccines were accessible to residents with mobility issues, language barriers, and those unable to take time off work to travel far for a clinic.



PPE Distribution

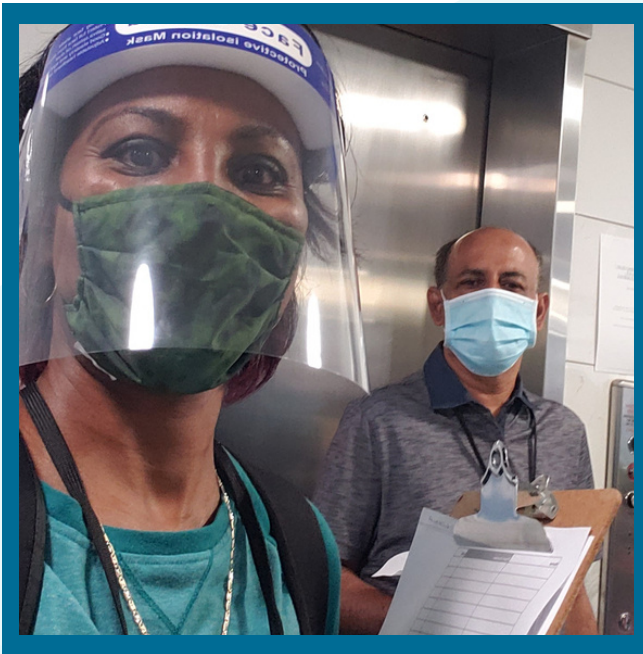
Residents were provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, sanitizer, Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) kits, PPE kits (with masks and sanitizer) to support with **community health and wellbeing, and reduce the spread of COVID-19**.

As the Community Ambassador Lead for TNO, I was privileged to be part of the EYDV Vaccine Engagement Team . . . [We] established trusting relationships with many residents from diverse backgrounds. We collaborated with ambassadors from different organizations . . . to connect people to essential resources . . . [addressing] critical health and social service needs in our community. Through this work, we met new people, enhanced our skills, and positively impacted the lives of those around us.

Razia Rashed

COMMUNITY HEALTH AMBASSADOR LEAD, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ORGANIZATION (TNO)





Non-Insured Vaccine Booking

In order to support equitable access to vaccines for people without Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) cards, the City partnered with Access Alliance and the FCJ Refugee Centre to create temporary health numbers for people without OHIP to get their vaccines. **Our team reached out to uninsured residents and vaccinated 4521 individuals.**



GO-VAXX Mobile Vaccine Clinics

To provide **easy-to access vaccinations in areas with low vaccination rates**, we partnered with Metrolinx and the province to host GO-VAXX Bus Clinics in both the east and west ends of the city. Eligible residents were able to receive their 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th COVID-19 vaccine onboard a GO-VAXX Bus.

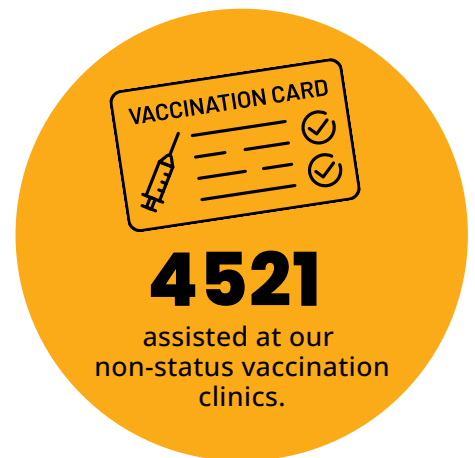
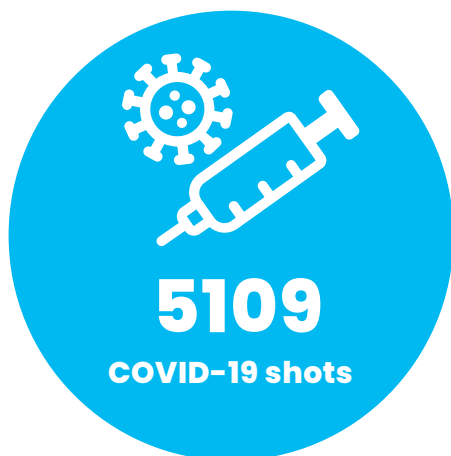
This project allowed us to create opportunities that were not available, build communities and enhance safety around health resources. It is commendable how CHAs went above and beyond to achieve these outcomes.

— Pamela Gawn

SENIOR MANAGER,
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & WOMEN'S PROGRAMS, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP



EYDV Community Engagement & Outreach Outcomes



I felt proud to be an ambassador when I gave PPE kits to the maintenance team in my apartment. This happened during the peak COVID time when everyone was scared to come out but the maintenance team had to keep working . . .

Sandhya

COMMUNITY HEALTH AMBASSADOR, ACCESS ALLIANCE

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EYDV Ambassador Capacity Building & Training Opportunities



Types of training offered:

City of Toronto

15 trainings in total:

- Orientation To Vaccine Engagement (4)
- Recurring Trainings and Learning Opportunities (2)
- Vaccine Engagement Training (8)
- Community of Practice (1)

Michael Garron Hospital

6 trainings in total:

- COVID-19 Awareness (2)
- COVID-19 Recovery (1)
- Cancer Screening (2)
- Health Access Taylor Massey (HATM) Service Directory Training (1)

Access Alliance

- Project orientation
- Roles and responsibilities
- Outreach health and safety
- COVID-19 protocols
- Weekly check-in meetings

Voices of Vaccine Engagement

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The success of the East Toronto Health Partner's vaccine response was heavily dependent on our community health ambassadors. They were our eyes and ears into our community. Not only could they individualize our COVID-19 vaccine message to the uniqueness of their neighbourhood but they taught us how to do continually improve what we were doing. Our ambassadors are the conduit to and from our community and are a critical component of our goal to improve the health of the people who call East Toronto home.

Dr. Jeff Powis
MEDICAL DIRECTOR,
MICHAEL GARRON HOSPITAL
& LEAD, EAST TORONTO
COVID RESPONSE TEAM



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During times of uncertainty, partner agencies and their Community Ambassador teams never failed to stand on the frontline . . . For two years, our team of agency leads and Community Ambassadors remained ready to confront any and every challenge the COVID-19 pandemic sent our way. Through this project, thousands of Taylor Massey, Oakridge, and Victoria Village residents were vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine.

Maria Dasoo
COMMUNITY ACTION
COORDINATOR,
ACCESS ALLIANCE



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The best part was, these communities and neighborhoods are mostly filled with immigrants, new immigrants who don't have the proper guidance or resources or knowledge for this pandemic and we were able to guide them . . . we were able to have such an impact in the community. It was really good.

Nazia
COMMUNITY HEALTH AMBASSADOR, ACCESS ALLIANCE



Shaping Place-based Community & Health Programming with EYDV Team



Mental health awareness session

Designed for community members and Ambassadors from the Taylor Massey, Oakridge and Victoria Village communities, this session helped attendees to address mental health stigma. It also covered how Ambassadors can help people living with mental health challenges, and facilitated the sharing of their own lived experiences in the community.



Wellness event

In March 2023, we hosted a wellness event at AccessPoint on Danforth with our 7 partners. This was a perfect opportunity to share community health resources with community members, as well as showcase health and social services available for the community members.



Ambassador appreciation

In celebration of our ambassadors and their impact in the community throughout the pandemic, Access Alliance hosted a Vaccine Engagement Ambassador Appreciation event with East York/Don Valley (EYDV) Consortium partners. Ambassadors were encouraged to connect with our partner organizations at the event in order to explore potential employment opportunities. This event ignited hope in our Ambassadors, motivating them to remain active within their respective organizations and continue to work within the community.



**Interested in learning more about the Vaccine Engagement Project and partners?
Contact the following project leads:**

EYDV CLUSTER COORDINATORS

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EYDV PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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namiri@afghanwomen.org

Nasima Akter, Executive Director, *Bangladeshi Canadian Community Services (BCS)*: nakter@bangladeshi.ca

Pamela Gawn, Senior Manager, Community Development and Women's Programs, *The Neighbourhood Group Community Services (TNGCS)*: pgawn@tngcs.org

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Kathy Hoover, Health Promotion Officer, *Toronto Community Housing (TCH)*: Kathy.Hoover@torontohousing.ca

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