

MISSION
PROMISE
NEIGHBORHOOD
DURING THE
COVID-19
PANDEMIC

KEY ACTIVITIES,
ACHIEVEMENTS,
& CHALLENGES
AMONG MPN
PARTNER
ORGANIZATIONS

OCTOBER
2020

PREPARED BY
THE MPN BACKBONE ORGANIZATION (BBO) TEAM



MISSION PROMISE
COMUNIDAD PROMESA DE LA MISSION
NEIGHBORHOOD

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Introduction

Mission Promise Neighborhood (MPN) serves children and families in the Mission District of San Francisco, CA. MPN works with nine schools and more than twenty partner agencies to provide a prenatal-through-postsecondary pipeline of supports. MPN focuses on building economic equity and social justice through educational support and community empowerment.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, every single MPN partner has shifted in focus and altered its service delivery to meet the urgent needs of community members, assist students and their families in adjusting to distance learning, and adjust programs to a remote model. In addition, partner agencies have collaborated with each other, and with organizations across San Francisco, in order to meet community members’ needs and implement new programs.

This research brief provides a survey of MPN partner organizations—their main activities, key successes, and ongoing challenges—during the first five months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Partner staff responded to a comprehensive survey on organizational activities in August 2020, the results of which comprise the rest of this report.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Latinx Families and Workers in San Francisco

The MPN network serves a predominantly Latinx community, with many non-English speakers and immigrants. This community has disproportionately suffered the financial and health-related effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These disparities can be attributed to preexisting structural inequalities. Many Latina/o residents live in overcrowded residences due to high housing costs, and/or work in industries with heightened risk of exposure to the coronavirus.

Many San Francisco workers, especially low-wage essential workers, are hesitant to take a COVID test and seek care because they are afraid that a positive diagnosis and the need to quarantine could lead to them being fired.

HILLARY RONEN, SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS FOR DISTRICT 9

COVID-19 testing data show that Latina/os have been infected at much higher rates than San Francisco residents as a whole. Latina/os have accounted for 50% of positive COVID-19 cases citywide while making up only 15% of the city population. The Mission District has been an epicenter for COVID-19 in the city, and an April 2020 UCSF study of Mission residents and workers further revealed the disparities in positive COVID-19 cases:

44%

of 2,959 people tested were Latino

95%

of 62 positive COVID-19 cases were Latino

90%

of people who tested positive cannot work from home

89%

of people who tested positive make less than \$50,000 a year

14%

of Latinos in California do not have healthcare, the highest uninsured rate statewide

As some people experience lingering COVID-19 symptoms for long periods after the initial infection, it will be crucial for MPN partners to provide social support and other services for people in the process of recovering from the disease. This is especially important given the prevalence of uninsured Latina/os, who are likely growing in number as community members lose their jobs and employer-sponsored healthcare.

Community members have lost jobs and income in extreme numbers, relative to San Franciscans as a whole. Service data demonstrate that 73% of those seeking services from MEDA had lost their job due to the pandemic. By contrast, the unemployment rate in San Francisco as a whole increased from 2% in March to a peak of 13% in May 2020. This widespread job loss also means that many community members have not been able to pay rent on a regular basis. While a citywide eviction moratorium has protected residents so far, many community members face the threat of displacement once those protections expire.

These widespread financial and health crises have required the MPN partner network to mobilize in order to meet families' urgent needs, as the following pages explore.

MPN Achievements During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Despite the many challenges that our partnership has faced during the pandemic, there are many accomplishments worthy of recognition. MPN partner organizations have deepened relationships, innovated in delivering programs and services, and adapted to an array of new challenges. Key highlights from MPN's pandemic response include:

PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORK CONNECTIONS

- Partner staff have leveraged their relationships with parent leaders to reach families across the community.
- School teams and partner staff wellness calls to families have served as a lifeline through these scary and unprecedented times.
- Teachers have taken on a stronger partnership role with families in supporting student learning, despite the difficulty of distance learning and remote communication.
- Partner organizations connected each other to financial resources, preventing layoffs and enabling some partners to expand programming.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Partners coordinated efforts across organizations to support the complex needs of families, including families that had suffered painful and traumatic loss.
- Many partners connected MPN families to critical resources, including food distribution.
- Some partners organized regular distributions for food and other essential items, with staff going above and beyond to meet community members' needs.
- Some partners organized drop-offs of essential items and food for families with one or more positive COVID-19 cases.
- Partners continued to offer workers' rights and immigration services, and helped win compensation for some workers whose employers had violated their workplace rights.
- Partners continued to organize family support groups and created new virtual parent groups, which helped families to feel less isolated during shelter in place.
- Staff and MPN families alike have demonstrated resilience, and have supported and uplifted each other.

EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AND HEALTH LITERACY

- Many MPN high school students graduated in the spring of 2020, and went on to four-year colleges and City College of San Francisco in the fall.
- Among the thousands of families saving for their children's college through the K2C program, fewer than ten families have made an emergency withdrawal from their fund. Despite widespread hardship, families are invested in their children's futures.
- Since the pandemic began, families whose children participate in Mission Neighborhood Health Center's pediatric asthma program have been more attentive to their children's respiratory symptoms, medication, and environmental triggers.

Urgent Community Needs and MPN Network Responses

Across the MPN Network of early care and education sites, family child care providers, partner sites, and schools, there were many student and family needs. The MPN network of partners documented the following top needs (not in order of priority):

- Food
- Financial assistance
- Technology: computer access, internet access, digital literacy
- Supporting students during distance learning
- Housing assistance
- Employment assistance
- Social-emotional support
- Access to resources and information
- Financial support for family child care providers

Every single member of the MPN network pivoted to remote programming in response to the pandemic. Although MPN partners normally provide a diverse range of services and educational programming, since the onset of shelter in place the entire network has had a common priority: connecting families to basic needs, and providing support for distance learning. Partner organizations have also fundraised to support family needs, petitioned city officials to allocate funds, and created new partnerships to secure essential resources.

Unfortunately with the COVID-19 crisis we are going through now...without the help of these organizations, many people would be lost and without help.

MPN PARENT AT BUENA VISTA / HORACE MANN (K-8 SCHOOL)

Examples of our partners' pandemic responses include:



Support for Families of Children with Disabilities worked with the Department of Public Health to get food delivered to families, helped families access food cards, and worked with SFUSD to get remote Individualized Education Program (IEP) services for students with special needs.

Good Samaritan Family Resource Center conducted weekly family wellness check-ins, assisted families with financial support applications, and connected families to urgently needed resources. Good Samaritan staff held distribution events to provide cash aid, diapers, hygiene products, and activity bags. Staff members fundraised to provide stipend to families with high-priority needs.



Seven Tepees Youth Program transitioned to provide all of its youth and family services virtually, including case management, college and career services, mental health services, and a four-week summer program. Staff also held monthly food distributions and supported families seeking coverage under the city's eviction moratorium.

Similarly, **Urban Services YMCA** moved its academic support efforts to a virtual format, while also adjusting programming to account for the high-stress environment during the pandemic. A new Move Up program for youth focused less on academics and more on interpersonal connection, social-emotional awareness, and exposure to college and career opportunities.



Jamestown Community Center has supported students and their families with an array of resource and distance learning needs. Jamestown staff have distributed and delivered laptops to families, assisted families in accessing and setting up home Wi-Fi connections, coached families in using Zoom and Google Classrooms, and distributed food to families. Staff members also assisted UCSF researchers in their Spring 2020 COVID-19 testing study in the Mission District.

Parents for Public Schools of San Francisco shifted to supporting families with basic needs, and created a spreadsheet of local community resources that staff shared with community partners. PPS staff also aided families enrolling their children in SFUSD, and provided advocacy assistance and policy information to community members.





The **Mission Neighborhood Health Center (MNHC)** set up a COVID-19 testing site at their facility, while shifting most care to phone or virtual appointments. MNHC staff focused on calling patients regarding mental health needs, and implemented a campaign to communicate information about COVID-19 and the onsite testing program. The **Nurse Midwives** staff also established a small food and resource pantry for prenatal program participants, and provided gift cards to patients in need.

Instituto Familiar de la Raza (IFR) provided telehealth services to staff and families; increased wellness checks; created virtual parent support groups; outreached and offered teacher wellness groups, worked closely with school social workers to outreach to vulnerable families, partnered with Family Success Coaches and Beacon staff to create alignment and coordination of care and developed and sent out a bilingual weekly Wellness Newsletter. There was a significant pivot to address and support adult health and wellness given the tremendous amount of uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and challenges managing new technology needs.



Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA) restructured its direct service work into three Action Teams to support families and the small business community with housing supports, financial assistance, and business assistance. MPN's Family Success Coaches have split their time between the Action Teams and their typical MPN work at schools, early care and education sites, and family child care providers.

Since March, the Action Teams have served over 3,500 community members with an array of services, including applying to relief funds, public benefits, business loans, and affordable housing units; drafting notices of nonpayment of rent for landlords; connecting COVID-positive residents in self-isolation to publicly-funded services; and directing families to other key resources, such as food banks. MEDA staff have also hosted over twenty informational sessions on Facebook Live, the majority of which have been bilingual or in Spanish.

Partner Collaboration Across the MPN Network

It has been extremely valuable in learning what is available in the community and in building stronger SFUSD–community partnerships during this crisis that hopefully will reach beyond this moment.

STAFF MEMBER, SFUSD EARLY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (MPN PARTNER AGENCY)

MPN partners have responded to the crisis by innovating, adapting, and collaborating with other partners. We saw strong collaboration between network partners to better support families with basic needs. Partner organizations also joined broader collaboratives and coalitions to advocate for resources and inform public officials about the particular needs of Latinos in the Mission.

Examples of partner collaborations include:



Over a half dozen partner organizations are part of the **Latino Task Force for COVID-19 (LTF)**, an ad hoc coalition of community organizations that formed to address the financial and health crises befalling Latino community members. The LTF was instrumental in assisting UCSF’s COVID-19 testing study in the Mission District, committing the city to funding supporting services for COVID-positive residents, and establishing a food distribution center in the Mission District.

Mission Graduates partnered with SFUSD to ensure youth had access to both laptops and internet access (hotspots). They embarked on a new partnership with Springboard, a remote learning company, to support elementary school students with distance learning needs.



Mission Neighborhood Centers partnered with local food pantries to address the widespread food insecurity among Mission District families. MNC staff created a volunteer system for food deliveries, packaging, distributing, and delivering food to local families. Staff also relayed information about COVID testing in the Mission. MNC also referred families to IFR’s mental health consultants, and connected residents to the Mission Asset Fund and Catholic Charities for temporary financial assistance.

La Raza Centro Legal (LCRL) partnered with MPN Family Success Coaches by receiving referrals for workers’ rights or immigration services. LRCL also participates in the Worker’s Rights Community Collaborative and S.F. Immigrant Legal and Education Network, and works closely with city agencies for labor standards and fair employment.





Felton Institute collaborated with **Tandem, Partners in Early Learning** and several organizations in the Bayview District on multiple book giveaways for students. Outside of the MPN network, Felton partnered with San Francisco State University's Child & Adolescent Development programs to prepare early literacy kits, and worked with the SF Marin Food Bank to connect families to food.



Tandem and **Kindergarten to College** also participate in BMAGIC, an initiative that brings together community-based organizations and public agencies in the historically marginalized neighborhoods of Bayview and Hunters Point.



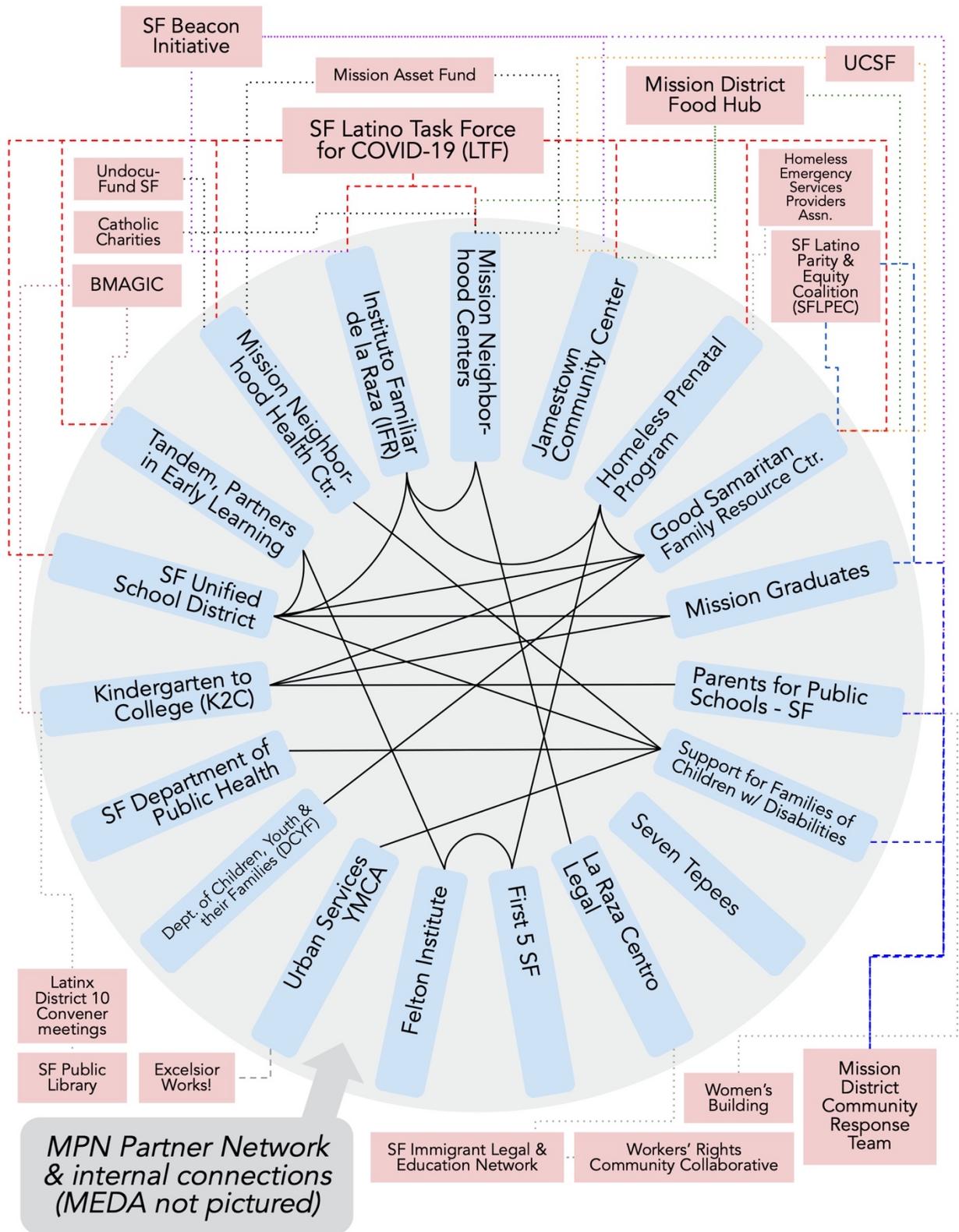
First 5 San Francisco continues to convene regular meetings for early childhood providers, family child care partners, and Family Resource Centers across the city. During the pandemic, these have included weekly emergency response meetings. Among these partners is the **Homeless Prenatal Program**, which has also worked with several other MPN partners to refer clients to key services, and has played a leading role in MPN's Abriendo Puertas program for parent leadership development.



The **SFUSD Early Education Department** partnered with multiple community-based organizations across the city to distribute backpacks and learning materials to students in Pre-K, kindergarten, first and second grade. This program assisted 110 MPN families with young children.

The following page includes a diagram of organizational partnerships and collaborations, both within and beyond the MPN network, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COLLABORATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN & BEYOND THE MPN PARTNER NETWORK FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE ACTIVITIES



Snapshots: Family Child Care Providers and Schools

FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Family child care providers in our network of partners closed down their home businesses and lost most of their income. Some providers, who were part of the San Francisco Quality Network, continued to receive subsidies from the San Francisco Office of Early Care and Education to cover the care of youth from low-income families. Nonetheless, these providers still suffered financially when closing down at the start of the pandemic. Family child care providers have many needs in order to continue their small businesses. These are a few of their needs:

- Larger programming spaces, especially outdoor space
- Rental assistance
- Funding for safety equipment (cleaning supplies, air purifiers, etc.) for children and staff
- Financial support for purchasing more educational materials for each child, since children cannot share materials
- Information around available resources

SCHOOL SITES

After the implementation of shelter-in-place orders, staff at the MPN schools devoted their time to connect with families, assess family needs and work with partner agencies to connect families to services. This collective work was carried out through MPN's existing collaborative structures. A key player has been the Student Assistance Program (SAP), a site-based multidisciplinary learning support team that coordinates support services and assists students who present with needs for increased academic or behavioral support.

At the onset of the pandemic, school staff supported families' needs regarding access to food, internet connectivity and access to tech devices. As the pandemic intensified additional needs emerged, including socio-emotional support, tenant rights, financial and health access.

MPN also partnered with the Close the Gap Coalition to hold a virtual town hall meeting for parents of students in MPN schools, to hear about their experiences with distance learning and SFUSD's ongoing plans for a remote model.

Mission District families have outlined many challenges regarding distance learning, such as:

- Need for additional communication from school personnel
- Need for parent workshops on digital literacy, using online learning platforms
- Insufficient fulfillment of required supports for English language learners and children with IEPs
- Unstable access to wireless internet
- Unavailability of laptops
- Need for more robust instructional practices, academic content, and small group 1:1 support

MPN's Backbone Organization Team Response

In addition to coordinating activities across the partner network, MPN's BBO staff, including managers and Family Success Coaches, have implemented their own activities and served families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Key highlights are summarized below.

EARLY LEARNING

MPN's key initiatives around early learning during the pandemic include:

- MPN provided an emergency \$550 food gift card to each FCC provider. In addition, MPN hosted an informational session for FCC provider staff to learn about funding opportunities and MEDA's supportive services. Subsequently, FCC provider partners have received nine grants with help from MEDA's Action Team coaches.
- MPN partnered with the SFUSD Early Education Department and several other community-based organizations to host a distribution event for early learning educational materials. MPN, SFUSD, and our partners distributed backpacks and early learning kits to 110 families with children between Pre-K and 2nd grade. MPN leveraged this distribution event to connect families to needed services.
- The Abriendo Puertas Strategy has continued during shelter-in-place. Since April, MPN has hosted online meetings for facilitators in the Abriendo Puertas Professional Learning Community. These meetings routinely draw participants from six partner sites, and focus on how to support partners with providing Abriendo Puertas sessions virtually, sharing best practices, and building facilitators' capacity with the Popular Education model.
- MPN collaborated with San Francisco School Board Commissioner Gabriela Lopez, three teachers from schools in the Mission District, and a preschool teacher at an MPN site, to create educational videos in Spanish for families and share them via Youtube.

FAMILY SUPPORT

The Family Success Coaches (FSCs) have built trusting relationships with the MPN families they have served over the years, and these relationships have been instrumental in helping families during the pandemic. Since the onset of shelter in place, FSCs have helped families find more information about COVID-19, field questions about distance learning, connect families to supportive services and emergency resources, and serve as a conduit between families and school staff.

K-12 ACTIVITIES

In order to coordinate their efforts to address structural barriers, SFUSD and community organizations co-planned a series of Community Partnership Forums. Two hundred and seventy-five community members and SFUSD leaders attended the first forum and provided input into focus areas around which to collaborate and organize.

Ongoing MPN Challenges During the Pandemic

The MPN partner network continues to innovate and adapt to serve the needs of students and families in the community. The district has begun the new school year with full remote learning. Looking beyond the new learning hubs, we foresee many challenges ahead. Below are some of the challenges that partners are working through at the moment:

CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Widespread need for full rental relief, not just a moratorium on rent payments
- Significant stress from loss of employment, loss of income, housing and food insecurity, health concern, education, childcare, and more
- Extra financial hardship for immigrant families ineligible for public benefits or federal relief funds
- Children and parents' difficulties in adjusting to a distance learning model
- Digital divides (barriers to home internet, computing devices, and/or digital literacy) among underserved families
- Additional difficulties in supporting children with disabilities or special healthcare needs without regular access to in-person services
- Need for accessible, user-friendly information about local resources and health practices

CHALLENGES FOR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- Responding to the large number of positive COVID-19 cases in the Mission community
- Maintaining positive relationships and collaboration as a provider network working remotely
- Collaborating on short-term and long-term support planning for MPN families
- Rebounding from loss of funding due to ECE center and school closures
- Absorbing additional costs for extra office cleanings, safety equipment, and other necessary supplies
- Confronting the many challenges of remote programming and services, such as distributing resources, creating an engaging learning environment, and building provider-client relationships
- Ensuring that direct services staff who work with families in person are healthy and safe
- Preventing staff burnout

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