

MISSION PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

KEY ACTIVITIES,
ACHIEVEMENTS,
& CHALLENGES
AMONG MPN
PARTNER
ORGANIZATIONS
IN 2020

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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. MPN is an initiative of the Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA).

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 2020. Partner staff responded to a comprehensive survey on organizational activities in February 2021. Additionally, in May 2021, MPN backbone staff surveyed 20 families about their experience in navigating COVID-19 resources, and how MPN early care and education sites and schools supported them through the pandemic.

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.

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 71% 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. Moreover, several MEDA clients reported that messaging around the moratorium and renters' rights had been piecemeal and uneven; and residents with informal rental arrangements (such as an off-the-record sublease) were unable to take advantage of the moratorium protections. In some cases, families facing limited circumstances and underinformed about the moratorium protections self-evicted once they were unable to pay rent.

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

It was easy for me to connect with school staff and ask for support, because of my existing relationships [with staff].

MPN PARENT AT BRYANT ELEMENTARY

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.
- Partners worked together as part of collaboratives and coalitions that informed the city and the state around the unique needs of the Mission District community.

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 financial assistance.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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 of 2020.
- Staff and MPN families alike have demonstrated resilience, and have supported and uplifted each other.

MPN'S BACKBONE TEAM RESPONSE

- Supported with the coordination of activities across the network.
- Joined various collaboratives and coalitions to advocate for the needs of families and MPN partner organizations. These included the Latino Taskforce Education Committee, the S.F. Latino Parity and Equity Coalition, the Mission District Response meetings focused on community building and wellness, the Childcare Planning and Advisory Council (CPAC), the Close the Gap Townhall meetings, and the SFUSD Community Partnerships Forum meetings.
- Hosted online meetings for facilitators in the Abriendo Puertas Professional Learning Community since April 2020. These meetings focused on building the capacity of facilitators, shifting to successful virtual programming, supporting each other to meet collective service goals, and sharing best practices.
- Partnered with San Francisco Board Commissioner Gabriela Lopez and four teachers to create educational videos in Spanish for families with young children.
- Mobilized Family Success Coaches to split their time between supporting and connecting school/early care and education site families and direct service work within MEDA’s service teams. These teams focused on supporting small business, including Family Child Care Providers; and supporting families with financial assistance and housing assistance.
- Distributed books to over 300 children during the annual Book Giveaway Event.

Urgent Community Needs and MPN Network Responses

Someone knows my life is super challenging right now, and they want me to have a cup of tea, take a break, and be in the moment. It felt really nice.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES PARENT, ON RECEIVING A FAMILY WELLNESS KIT

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
- Access to child care while providers had reduced capacity
- Financial support for family child care providers

Additionally, early on in the pandemic, MPN 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 shared many early 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

Every single member of the MPN network pivoted to remote programming in response to the pandemic. MPN partners provided a diverse range of services such as 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 SFUSD to get remote Individualized Education Program (IEP) services for students with special needs, they collaborated with many organizations to develop a website specifically for families of children with disabilities, and they continued to support families with ASQ developmental screenings by phone.



In 2020,

88%

of SFF families learned to advocate more effectively for their children with special needs



92%

of Abriendo Puertas participants graduated from the program

Good Samaritan Family Resource Center conducted weekly family wellness check-ins and co-lead the Family Resource Center Alliance to address the increase in mental health issues, child abuse, domestic violence, and financial needs of families. Staff held distribution events to provide cash aid, diapers, hygiene products, and activity bags. They continued to provide Abriendo Puertas through the pandemic by shifting to virtual programming.

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.



75%

of college-eligible seniors at the Learning Center submitted college applications



87%

of participating students said they made a new connection with a peer in the program

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.

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.



INSTITUTO FAMILIAR
DE LA RAZA, INC.

IFR staff supported

548

*teachers across all
MPN schools in
2020*



83%

of students participating in after-school programming reported feeling safe

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 they shared with community partners. PPS staff also aided families enrolling their children in SFUSD, and provided advocacy assistance and policy information to community members. They hosted a series of technology workshops for families to support with distance learning.



510

families received PPS support in 2020



In 2020, MNHC provided 4,909 well-baby visits, and

90%

of pregnant mothers served by the SFGH Nurse Midwives had a normal gestational age at delivery

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 SFGH Nurse Midwives established a food and resource pantry for prenatal program participants. For patients that developed COVID-19, they did intense case management which included home delivery of groceries and regular phone check-ins to provide both emotional support and assessment of physical health.

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 MEDA's pandemic response units, or Action Teams; and their typical MPN work at schools, early care and education sites, and family child care providers.



The Action Teams have provided an array of services, including applying to relief funds, business loans, and affordable housing; 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.

Between March and December 2020, MEDA's Action Teams served

5,600

community members

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.

MPN PARTNER, SFUSD EARLY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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 Latino/as 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.



LTF administered

70,000

COVID-19 tests in the hardest hit areas of the Mission District and southeast neighborhoods of San Francisco.



100%

of college-eligible seniors at John O'Connell High School submitted college applications in 2020

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. They partnered with the San Francisco Latino Parity and Equity Coalition and the Latino Task Force to better support their families.

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. MNC partnered with the Latino Task Force and the San Francisco Latino Parity and Equity Coalition.



100%

of MNC children are connected to a medical home and have been screened using the ASQ developmental screening.



LCRL made a combined

155

immigration and workers' rights consultations in 2020

La Raza Centro Legal (LCRL) partnered with MPN Family Success Coaches and MPN partners 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 on multiple book giveaways for students. 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 and First 5 S.F. to connect families to food. They also had closer communication with SF Dept. of Public Health regarding safety precautions to address reopening schools, and safety protocols for serving families for direct service during the pandemic.



100%

of Felton children are connected to a medical home and have been screened using the ASQ developmental screening



1,815

*MPN children
received Tandem
books at MPN-
affiliated schools
and partner sites*

Tandem, Partners in Early Learning participated in the Latino Task Force Early Childhood Committee meetings and the BMAGIC meetings that bring together CBOs to share information and resources and collaborate on projects across the Mission District and the Bayview District. Tandem collaborated with the district, EDvance, Felton Institute and several partners in the Bayview District on several book giveaways. Additionally, Tandem partnered with MPN to produce a Facebook Live session in May of 2020 focused on providing families with strategies and resources to support children's early learning and social-emotional development during shelter-in-place. It has been viewed 2,521 times to date.

Kindergarten to College is part of the Treasurer's Office working on the city's economic recovery efforts. K2C partnered with Mission Graduates, Parents for Public Schools, and Good Samaritan to better serve students in the Mission District. With no access to school sites, K2C shifted their work to digital outreach and engagement. They created a Spanish Facebook page that now has 450+ followers, hosted 25 Facebook live events with a total of 250 participants, and offered over 100 zoom workshops. Among the thousands of families saving for their children's college expenses, fewer than ten families made withdrawals because of financial hardship.



*Families living in the MPN
footprint saved*

\$985,846

*in 2020, including through K2C
incentives*



First 5 S.F. invested

\$2.4 million

*in COVID-19 relief to partners, providers, and
families*

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 that included many MPN partners.

The **Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP)** collaborated closely with Good Samaritan Family Resource Center and Instituto Familiar de La Raza to provide streamlined referrals to key services. HPP participated in the COVID-19 Re-envisioning Planning meetings, the Latino Task Force Early Childhood Education Committee, citywide coalitions such as Homeless Emergency Services Providers Association (HESPA) and First 5 San Francisco's weekly planning meetings for Family Resource Centers. Despite the pandemic, HPP shifted very quickly to offer Abriendo Puertas virtually. They led the way for other partners and shared their learnings.



HPP served

88

*participants in Abriendo
Puertas in 2020*



MPN staff distributed backpacks and materials to

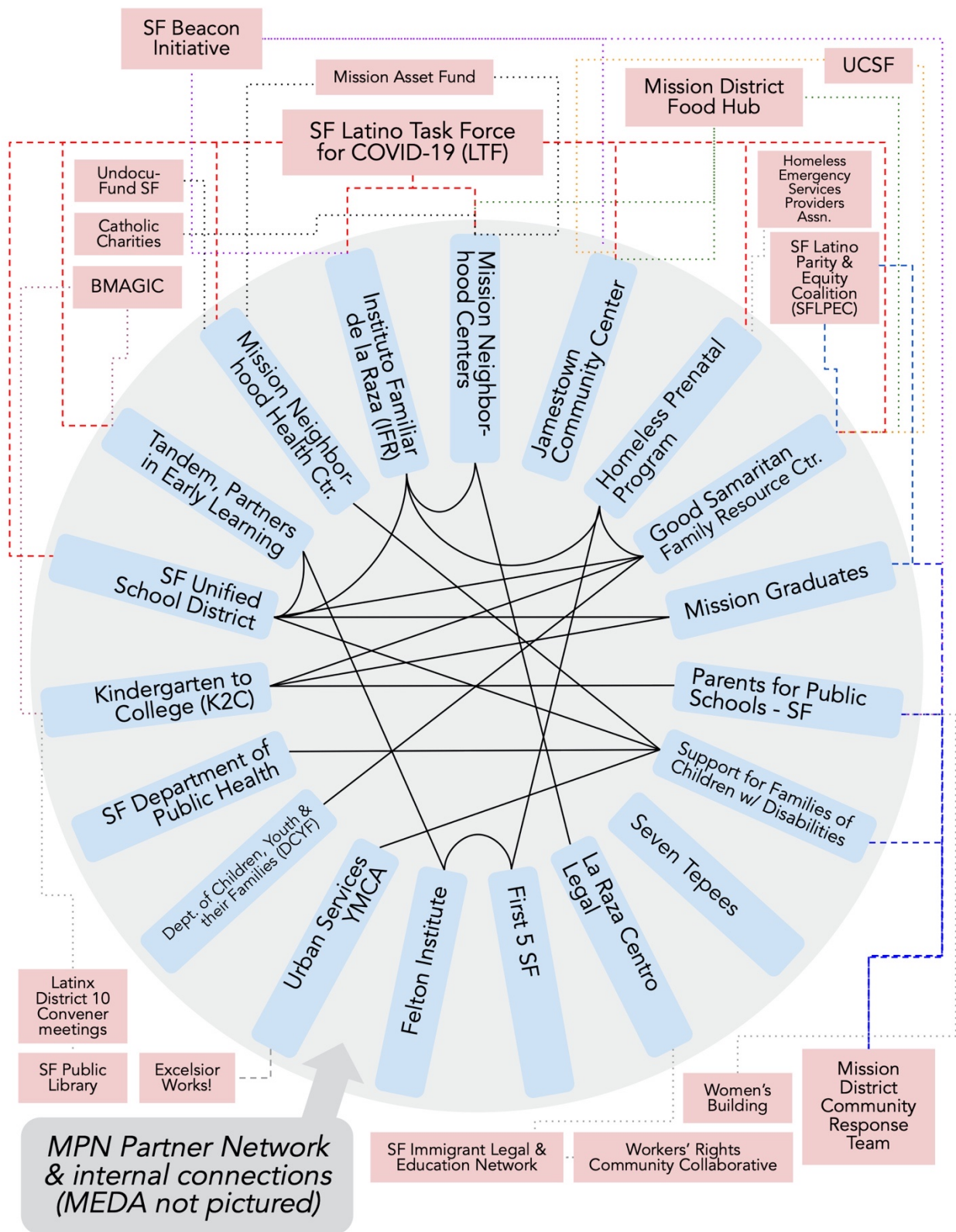
110

families with children enrolled in the district

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. SFUSD EED partnered with the Latino Taskforce early childhood committee.

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 at the beginning of the pandemic. 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 children from low-income families. Family child care providers had 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

Family child care providers did have some success stories, such as: building stronger trusting relationships with families continuing to support families in various ways; having no COVID-19 positive cases reported at their sites; and having extra time to spend with their own families.

MPN backbone staff, including Early Learning Family Success Coaches, worked with providers and supported families in a variety of ways:

- Provided emergency food gift cards to the providers.
- Convened a family child care provider meeting with various city-wide partners to plan for a coordinated system of care for providers during the pandemic.
- Connected providers with grants and helped secure \$262,000 in funding for family child care businesses across San Francisco.
- Providers were supported with the MEDA Community Real Estate (CRE) affordable housing application process for units designated as family child care business apartments. Two MPN providers won the lottery and will be providing care for families living in the buildings.
- Supported families served by providers and made 137 referrals to connect them to services such as digital literacy, health care, housing, financial assistance, parenting programs, early care and education programs, legal aid, and many more.

SCHOOL SITES

I felt that I could reach out to school staff at any time, especially the principal, to get support for my child and myself.

MPN PARENT AT SANCHEZ ELEMENTARY

SFUSD closed its campuses on March 13, 2020, and communication with families became a key focus. The district rolled out a free meals program for children 18 and younger at 20 sites and began distributing Google Chromebooks and wi-fi hotspots to students who did not have devices or internet connectivity at home. At the end of March, the district rolled out its Distance Learning Model in phases. One of the key challenges was online accessibility and digital literacy among families who lack these tools and resources.

The district developed and distributed learning packets PreK through 2nd grade students and produced a daily one-hour television episode geared towards PreK to 2nd grade students titled SF Loves Learning. In late April, the district rolled out its own family support line titled Family Resource Link designed to help families navigate SFUSD resources and provide answers to their questions around distance learning. In July, the district held a series of virtual parent town halls and administered a survey to collect parent input on school reopening. In November, the district announced a plan of gradual return to in-person learning with a target date of January 25, 2021 and that eventually changed to April 2021.

At the beginning of the pandemic, 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. 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 supports, tenant rights, financial assistance, and health access.

MPN families surveyed for this report shared the supports and school-site collaborative structures that worked to assist students and families in 2020. These supports included:

- Virtual out-of-school programming provided by MPN partners during the school year and summer term
- Virtual supports for children with IEPs
- Extra virtual support with homework from teachers
- Wellness calls from various school staff, such as principals, vice principals, teachers, social workers, mental health consultants, family liaisons, and family success coaches. Nearly all families received at least one wellness call in 2020.
- School staff and partner agencies connected families to a variety of resources including books, computers, financial assistance, social-emotional supports, health care, hygiene

products, COVID-19 testing information, food, affordable housing resources, and muni transportation passes.

- Family success coaches directly assisted many families, connecting them to a variety of resources including tax appointments, below market rate (BMR) housing applications, tech support, social-emotional support, tenant rights, food, employment assistance, kinder enrollment assistance, distribution of books and materials, and financial assistance, especially for rent relief.

MPN Family Success Coaches collaborated with school and partner staff to refer families to services and to provide direct support with financial assistance, housing assistance, and small business support. Within MEDA's Action Teams, Family Success Coaches supported a total of 904 families with:

- 740 referrals to a variety of services
- 1,122 below market rate (BMR) applications for housing
- 196 letters to landlords in legal compliance with eviction moratorium protections
- 115 applications for SFUSD technology and low-cost internet resources
- 1,439 income relief applications
- 101 EBT food applications

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. Challenges that partners are currently facing include:

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 concerns, childcare, and more
- Extra financial hardship for immigrant families ineligible for public benefits & relief funds
- Children and parents' difficulties in adjusting to a distance learning model and concerns over learning loss
- 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
- Exacerbated feelings of social isolation, which highlighted the already existing and now growing need for mental and behavioral health supports
- Need for accessible, user-friendly information about local resources & health practices

CHALLENGES FOR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- Responding to the large number of positive COVID-19 cases in the Mission community
- Maintaining positive, collaborative relationships 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
- For partners that have seen a steep increase in certain services, such as legal aid, there aren't enough resources to satisfy the community need
- Ensuring that direct services staff who work with families in person are healthy and safe
- Preventing staff burnout

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