

Pediatric Disaster Preparedness Ambassador project: Todos Preparados* Assessing Climate Disaster Preparedness in Spanish-speaking Families with Children

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Disasters affect all people, but they do not affect all people equally. Nearly 40% of California households identify as Hispanic or Latino and 27% of residents are immigrants, the largest share of any state. California is an especially climate-stressed state, and we know that there is a **lack of research on disaster preparedness for immigrant families and for children.**



As a fellow in Pediatric Emergency Medicine, I have been fortunate to work with mentors **Nicolaus Glomb, MD, MPH, and Kevan McCarten Gibbs, MD**, with experience in disaster preparedness. Our team conducted this needs assessment of the climate-readiness of Spanish-speaking immigrant families in the Bay Area, especially focusing on preparedness involving children and youth, and hopes in the future to develop and provide education and resources to this vulnerable community.

We were generously funded by the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Disaster Preparedness Ambassador grant program through AAPCA1**. We initially connected with local and state government officials, AAP experts on climate change and disaster

preparedness, and other non-profit organizations to inform our project. We decided to focus specifically on preparation for climate-related disasters such as wildfires, floods, extreme heat, and extreme storms, especially actionable pediatric preparation information for Spanish-speakers. We partnered with a community organization called *Vision y Compromiso*, which organizes, trains, and employs *Promotores de Salud* or Spanish-speaking health promoters who share the language and culture of our participants

In December of 2024, we conducted a pilot of focus group and survey questions about climate preparedness with **UCSF's Youth Research Advisory Council** to collect feedback. We then conducted focus groups and surveys of 20 Spanish-speaking family representatives from at least 6 different countries of origin facilitated by **Promotoras** at the Mexican Consulate in San Francisco, asking about participants past experiences with disasters, their current preparations with their family and household, and what education and resources they would like in the future to help prepare for climate disasters.

We found that participants had a broad range of past experiences with disasters and identified what they felt were important aspects of preparedness including a family emergency plan, physical supplies set aside in case of disasters, the importance of personal and family resilience, and addressing the root causes of climate change. Participants also identified several barriers to household preparedness including lack of time, money, perceived importance, as well as language and cultural barriers. Overwhelmingly, participants identified a need for more disaster-related education and resources, requesting workshops, classes, simulations, first-aid training, and trustworthy sources of Spanish-language information.

I presented our findings in a poster at the recent **Pediatric Academic Societies** meeting in Honolulu, HI on April 28th. Our next steps in this project are to conduct a similar needs assessment with families of children with special healthcare needs, as well as to start creating culturally sensitive Spanish-language educational materials for families focused on climate disaster preparedness. We hope that this project and future educational materials can be shared with others to increase its impact.

In the current political climate, immigrant children and families face new threats of deportation and family separation in addition to existing worries like disaster preparedness, climate change, and the challenges of everyday life. This project reminds me of the strength, knowledge, and resilience of these communities, and inspires me to keep advocating for them because, as AAP President Dr. Susan J. Kressly recently reminded federal leaders, immigrant children are children.

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*Todos Preparados means “All Prepared” in Spanish