



Fact Sheet: Nurse Practitioners and California's Latino Community

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Nurse practitioners (NPs) are a vital part of California's health care workforce. Today they play a particularly important role providing care to underserved Californians, especially Latino communities. They are more likely to work in safety-net settings, including community health centers, where Latinos disproportionately get their care.

Today, more than seven million Californians, the majority of whom are Latino, live in Health Professional Shortage Areas.¹ With primary care and other provider shortages projected to grow over the next decade, NPs will play an even greater role in ensuring Latino families can access the care they need.² That is especially true, given that NPs already represent nearly a third of California's primary care workforce and that their numbers in the state are growing at twice the rate of physicians.

Latinos Face Growing Health Access Challenges:

- **Latinos are more likely to experience provider shortages:** 44% of Latinos said that there are not enough primary care providers in their community to meet local needs — compared to 35% for Californians overall.³
- **Latinos are the least likely group to report having a usual source of care:** 19% of Latino Californians report having no usual source of care, compared to 8% of white Californians.⁴
- **Latino Californians have the hardest time finding a specialist:** 16.6% of Latino Californians report having a difficult time finding a specialist, compared to 9.3% for white Californians.⁵

How to Talk About NPs — in Spanish

As nurse practitioners serve a growing number of Californians, the medical community has found new ways to describe this specialty to patients who may not be familiar with the term.

Since there is no word for “nurse practitioner” in the health care systems of Spanish-speaking countries, for example, several phrases are now used to describe NPs. All these terms seek to highlight NPs' status as advance practice nurses who are certified in many clinical areas — and who are qualified to treat certain medical conditions and to provide an array of health services.

Frontline Certified Healthcare Interpreters (CHI) in Los Angeles County and in San Francisco use the following terms for NPs:

- *Enfermera especializada/enfermero especializado* [nurse specialist]*
- *Enfermera especialista/enfermero especialista* [specialized nurse]
- *Enfermera/o de práctica médica* [medical practice nurse]

*The most widely used term used by the California Healthcare Interpreting Association, according to former CHIA president José García.

NPs Provide Care Where It's Most Needed:

- **NPs play an important role in the safety net:** Over 60% of NPs in California say they always or almost always work with underserved populations.⁶
- **NPs play a major role in community health centers:** California NPs more than twice as likely to work in a community health center than physicians.⁷
- **NPs are more likely to speak Spanish than physicians:** 27% of California NPs speak Spanish, compared to less than 20% of physicians.⁸
- **NPs are more likely to be Latino than physicians:** 8.6% of California NPs are Latino, compared to 5% of physicians.⁹
- **NPs in California are more likely to work in primary care than physicians:** 59% of NPs work in primary care, compared to 17% of physicians.¹⁰ NPs also represent nearly a third of California's primary care workforce, and their numbers in the state are growing at twice the rate of physicians.¹¹
- **NPs nationwide are more likely to work in rural communities than physicians.**¹²

Endnotes

¹ "[HPSA \[Health Professional Shortage Area\] Find](#)," Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) n.d.

² [Meeting the Demand for Health: Final Report of the California Future Health Workforce Commission \(PDF\)](#), California Future Health Workforce Commission, February 2019.

³ [The Health Care Priorities and Experiences of California Residents](#), KFF/CHCF, January 2019.

⁴ Robbin Gaines, [Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity: The California Landscape](#), CHCF, October 2019.

⁵ Gaines, [Health Disparities](#).

⁶ Joanne Spetz et al., [2017 Survey of Nurse Practitioners and Certified Nurse Midwives](#), Healthforce Center at UCSF, April 2018.

⁷ Joanne Spetz, [Expanding the Role of Nurse Practitioners in California: The Impact on Patient Access to Care \(PDF\)](#), CHCF, May 2019.

⁸ Spetz et al., *2017 Survey*; and Janet M. Coffman, Igor Geyn, and Margaret Fix, [California Physicians: Who They Are, How They Practice \(PDF\)](#), CHCF, August 2017.

⁹ Spetz et al.; and Coffman, Geyn, and Fix.

¹⁰ Spetz et al.; and Coffman, Geyn, and Fix.

¹¹ Spetz et al.; and Coffman, Geyn, and Fix.

¹² [Meeting the Demand](#).