



Fact Sheet: Nurse Practitioners and California's Latino/x Community

April 2022

Nurse practitioners (NPs), or *enfermeros especializados* in Spanish,¹ are a vital part of California's health care workforce. They play a particularly important role providing high-quality care to underserved Californians, especially in Latino/x communities. They are more likely to work in safety-net settings, including community health centers, where Latino/x Californians disproportionately get their care.

Today, more than seven million Californians, the majority of whom are Latino/x, live in Health Professional Shortage Areas.² With primary care and other provider shortages projected to grow over the next decade, NPs will play an even greater role in ensuring Latino/x families can access the care they need.³ 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.

***Enfermero/a especializado/a* is the Spanish word for nurse practitioner.¹**

The care provided to Latinos/x in California should be the same high-quality care provided to all Californians. Research studies show that NPs provide primary care of similar quality as physicians and, in some aspects, NP quality of care may be higher.⁴

Latino/x Californians Face Growing Challenges Accessing Care

Nearly one in five Latino/x Californians report having no usual source of care.⁵ They are also:

- **More likely to experience provider shortages:** 44% said there are not enough primary care providers in their community to meet local needs, compared to 35% of Californians overall.⁶
- **Most likely to say that they, or a family member, had to put off physical health care** or skip a medical test due to cost in the last 12 months.⁷
- **Least likely to say that they can get health care for themselves or their family at a location "that is easy to get to."**⁸
- **Least likely to report that it's easy to find health care they can afford for themselves or their family.**⁹
- **The least likely to report having a primary care provider, even when they are insured, compared to other insured Californians.**¹⁰

Nurse Practitioners Provide Care Where It's Needed the Most

- **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.¹¹
- **NPs play a major role in community health centers.** California NPs are more than twice as likely to work in a community health center than physicians.¹²
- **NPs are more likely to speak Spanish than physicians.** In California, 27% of NPs speak Spanish, compared to less than 20% of physicians.¹³
- **NPs are more likely to work in primary care than physicians.** Among California NPs, 59% work in primary care, compared to 17% of physicians.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵
- **NPs nationwide are more likely to work in rural communities than physicians.**¹⁶

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Endnotes

¹ This Spanish language term for NP was codified in California state law AB 890, passed in 2020.

² "[HPSA Find](#)," Health Resources and Services Administration.

³ [Meeting the Demand for Health: Final Report of the California Future Health Workforce Commission](#) (PDF), California Future Health Workforce Commission (Commission), February 2019.

⁴ Robin P. Newhouse et al., "[Advanced Practice Nurse Outcomes 1990-2008: A Systematic Review](#)," *Nursing Economics* 29, no. 5 (Sep.-Oct. 2011): 230–50.

⁵ Megan Thompson and Allison Valentine, [Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity in California, 2021: Pattern of Inequity](#), California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), October 2021.

⁶ [The 2019 Kaiser Family Foundation / CHCF California Health Policy Survey](#), CHCF.

⁷ Rebecca Catterson, Lucy Rabinowitz, and Emily Alvarez, [The 2022 CHCF California Health Policy Survey](#), CHCF, January 2022.

⁸ Catterson, Rabinowitz, and Alvarez, *2022 CHCF Survey*.

⁹ Catterson, Rabinowitz, and Alvarez.

¹⁰ NORC report [forthcoming].

¹¹ Joanne Spetz et al., [2017 Survey of Nurse Practitioners and Certified Nurse Midwives](#), Healthforce Center at UCSF, April 2018.

¹² Joanne Spetz, [Expanding the Role of Nurse Practitioners in California: The Impact on Patient Access to Care](#) (PDF), CHCF, May 2019.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Spetz et al., *2017 Survey*; and Coffman, Geyn, and Fix, *California Physicians*.

¹⁵ Spetz et al.; and Coffman, Geyn, and Fix.

¹⁶ *Meeting the Demand*, Commission.