

# The Healing Power of Community Engagement



The pandemic has highlighted stark disparities in health, with people of color hardest hit with sickness and death. The impacts of other diseases also are felt unequally. Addiction and overdose, for example, have spiked in rural areas.

So that all communities can thrive and be healthy, the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) engages people across ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, geography, and diseases and conditions as partners in research.

## Engaged Communities Benefit All

The NCATS-funded [Clinical and Translational Science Awards \(CTSA\) Program](#) is the backbone of our community engagement efforts. The program supports a national network of more than 60 medical research institutions, known as “hubs,” that work collaboratively to develop innovative approaches and technologies to improve the quality, efficiency and speed of clinical and translational research.

CTSA Program scientists work with community partners to help make sure that new treatments, cures and resources reach everyone who needs them. They team with local leaders to better understand what residents need to improve their well-being. Their efforts educate communities and researchers, speed studies on promising new therapies and expand treatment delivery and access.

The work also overcomes barriers that stand in the way of greater health equity. Such barriers may include reluctance to take part in medical studies and lack of access to health care and services, as well as research systems that can overlook certain groups.

## Community Engagement in Action

The following examples show how NCATS' CTSA Program scientists and their local partners work together to prevent disease, promote health and respond to health emergencies among different communities.

**Improving Clinical Trial Participation:** To boost participation among those underrepresented in research, CTSA Program researchers at Yale University teamed with local faith-based and social services leaders in African American and Latino communities. That collaboration created the [Yale Cultural Ambassadors Program](#), which builds trust and increases participation in clinical trials for conditions from prostate cancer to COVID-19.

**Expanding Outreach:** Vaccine hesitancy and lack of access to health care services can stifle COVID-19 vaccination rates. CTSA Program researchers at the University of California, Davis, partnered with state government, faith- and community-based organizations to build [MOVE IT UP](#), an initiative to improve vaccination rates within African American, Latino and rural communities of Sacramento and Yolo counties.

**Speeding Access to Diagnosis and Treatment:** Early detection and treatment can stop the slide from diabetic retinopathy to blindness. To expand opportunities for people from underserved and racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds to receive eyesight-saving specialty care, CTSA Program researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, worked with Los Angeles County to put retinopathy screening tools in county-run primary care clinics. [The program](#) boosted screening rates, slashed screening wait times and shortened the path to specialty treatment.

## Ready for Tomorrow's Health Challenges

The CTSA Program's long-standing relationships and robust research resources will give the hubs a head start in responding to future health challenges and accelerating the quest for health answers that benefit all people.

Learn more about how NCATS and its CTSA Program [work with communities](#) to improve health for everyone.

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