

School closures during the COVID pandemic have created significant challenges for children and youth. With less direct connection and engagement with their peers, educators, or routine activities, many young people are experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, fatigue and burnout.

There are documented increases in suicide attempts, and concerns about increases in child abuse, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and eating disorders. Many youth face challenges with housing and food instability caused by unemployment and the economic downturn. School closures and restrictions on parks and youth sports have even prevented youth from participating in physical activity.

In addition, many health services students typically receive at school have been relocated, paused and/or delayed; however, the need for these services persists. Access to mental health, family planning, wellness visits, and dental services - all important to support healthy development for children and youth - are much harder to provide. Telehealth has helped bridge some but not all of this gap.

Across California, school-based health centers (SBHCs) launched innovative strategies to address the challenges that remote schooling has created. Many centers have utilized social media strategies such as posting stories and videos on Instagram and Tik Tok to provide youth with information about COVID-19 facts, safe sex practices, nutrition, and ways to stay connected with their peers during the pandemic.

Schools and SBHCs have provided free youth-only Zoom sessions that discuss fun topics and offer incentives like gift cards to those who participate. SBHCs are also addressing basic needs by distributing food, connecting youth and their families to legal services, addressing mental health concerns, and offering youth engagement programming.

Below are some specific examples from four school-based health agencies in California that have implemented virtual strategies to engage youth, inform families, and support educators and communities. Overall, these approaches and strategies highlight:

- Incentivizing youth participation with fun “swag” and gift cards
- Utilizing social media platforms that are most widely used by youth
- Engaging and supporting youth to reach out to their peers
- Using technology to inform and connect youth to clinic services



**SAN YSIDRO
HEALTH**



San Ysidro Health

San Ysidro Health has a teen-friendly phone number for calls and texts that is promoted on their Instagram page. They plan their content and have a schedule to ensure they stay consistent with all social media. They hold 'Question Tuesdays' on Instagram where staff set up a question box on their Instagram Story and invite youth to ask questions on any health education topic. The questions and answers are then posted on their Story for others to see. On 'TikTok Fridays' San Ysidro Health posts TikTok videos created by youth or health educators. Their team uses Instagram Insights to understand which posts are most effective in engaging youth. Their most popular tools for creating content are Canva and Mentimeter. Canva is used to design creative presentations, logos, and posters that can then be shared to Instagram. San Ysidro Health staff love using Mentimeter as a way to create interactive presentations for youth since it allows for real-time voting. Incentivizing participation can help motivate youth to engage and can include: gift cards, swag, goodie bags, etc. Their advice for adults is to support youth-to-youth outreach.

Website: syhc.org

Instagram: [@syhteenclinic](https://www.instagram.com/syhteenclinic)

TikTok: [@syhteenclinic](https://www.tiktok.com/@syhteenclinic)



The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health

The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health hosts weekly Zoom meetings with Student Advisory Boards from local school-based health and wellness centers. Student Advisory Boards are composed of students who want to be wellness ambassadors to their peers. Virtual meetings include fun activities such as charades to avoid Zoom fatigue, and the LA Trust recommends that students add a photo to their Zoom account that shows even when their cameras are off. Their youth members are very involved in running their Instagram page and presenting on Instagram Live. Their social media campaigns bring awareness to adolescent health and wellness topics such as HIV/AIDS and mental health during COVID-19. They suggest adapting social media trends to increase youth engagement in health education. For example, if a popular challenge is trending on social media, staff and youth can create a fitness challenge instead with a similar hashtag to raise awareness.

Website: thelatrust.org

Instagram: [@cougarhealthandwellness](https://www.instagram.com/cougarhealthandwellness)
[@thewashsquad](https://www.instagram.com/thewashsquad)



**Mental health during
COVID 19 stress**

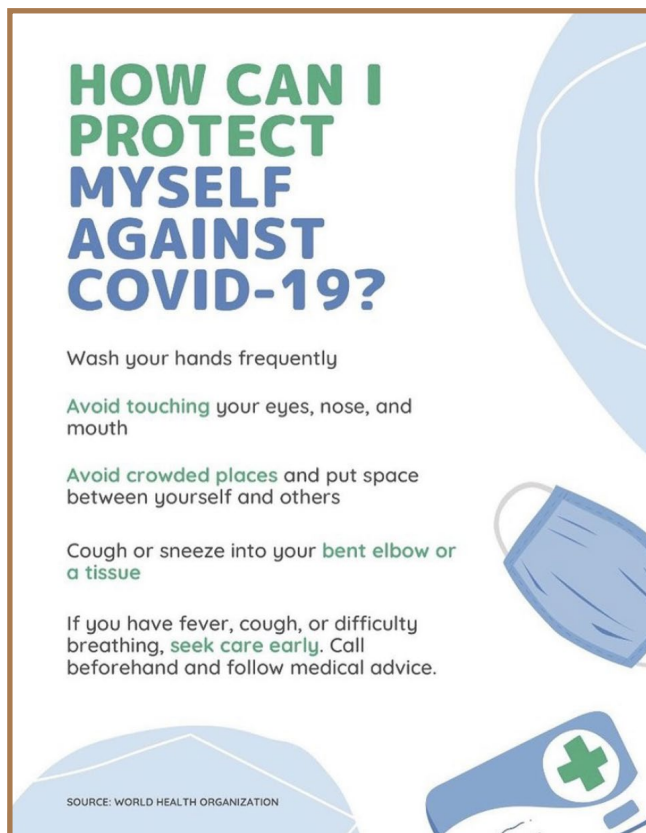
"Be kind to your mind"

Everyone may have different methods to cope with stress, it is important to find what works best for you.

- Communicate: Reach out to loved ones , call a friend, talk to a trusted person about your emotions
- Take care of your body: Stretching, meditation, maintain a healthy nutritional diet while getting good amounts of sleep and exercise
- Take a break from the media: taking time to pause listening, watching, or reading about the pandemic can help you feel less overwhelmed or anxious

a few websites like these can provide more information and tips on your mental health

adolescenthealth.org
cdc.gov
teenmentalhealth.org



**HOW CAN I
PROTECT
MYSELF
AGAINST
COVID-19?**

Wash your hands frequently

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

Avoid crowded places and put space between yourself and others

Cough or sneeze into your bent elbow or a tissue

If you have fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, seek care early. Call beforehand and follow medical advice.

SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

La Clínica de la Raza

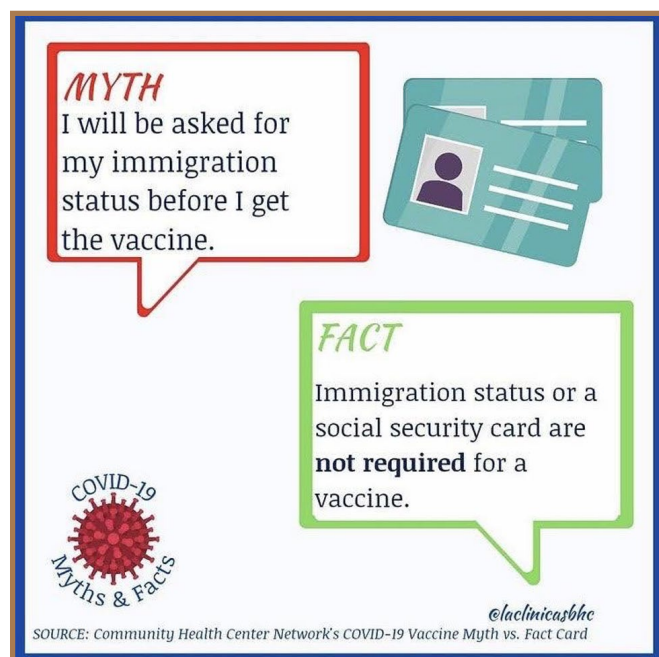
La Clínica de La Raza's School-Based Health Center department supports small peer health education groups in leading virtual campaigns via Zoom workshops and social media. Youth participate by creating content for their social media platforms and join workshops to provide tips on managing stress. Students that have an interest in health and wellness topics apply to the Peer Health Education program and receive incentives for their attendance and participation throughout the year.

The SBHC department has also been scheduling students for virtual adolescent screening visits. These visits help connect students to their health center and allow for the health center to understand how they can best support youth. Health educators and other clinical staff call students to complete a comprehensive [HEADSS assessment](#) and a screening for medical, dental, and optical services. Medical providers join the call if an urgent matter arises. This is an amazing way to introduce students to their health center and build rapport!

At Roosevelt Middle School in Oakland, La Clínica staff and a cohort of six students also worked to support The Mental Health Ally Project, which celebrates mental health allies and brings awareness to mental health issues through various online platforms. They send distance gifts such as art supplies, stress balls, headphones, journals, fidget gadgets, and self-care strategies to their peers to support student wellness. The Mental Health Ally Project highlights peer health education, student led campaigns, and the expansion of telehealth and mental health services.

Website: laclinica.org

Instagram: [@laclinicashbc](https://www.instagram.com/laclinicashbc)



MYTH
I will be asked for my immigration status before I get the vaccine.

FACT
Immigration status or a social security card are **not required** for a vaccine.

COVID-19 Myths & Facts

SOURCE: Community Health Center Network's COVID-19 Vaccine Myth vs. Fact Card

@laclinicashbc



Recipe for
Self-Love **PART II**

Follow accounts that portray different types of bodies

Practice not calling food 'good' or 'bad.' All food can be nourishing!

Write a love letter to your body

Talk to your friends about how they feel about their bodies

Wear clothes that make you feel comfortable

These tips comes from
The Self-Love Revolution: Radical Body Positivity for Girls of Color by Virgie Tovar

Foodie Fridays
@laclinicashbc

Kerman Unified School District Community Health Center

The Kerman Unified School District Community Health Center created a virtual clinic tour to highlight their partnerships, services, and facilities. Virtual clinic tours can help students and community members get to know an SBHC, its mission, and feel more comfortable with the staff and services. The video highlights that the center serves all students and community members regardless of their ability to pay. They also show their welcoming behavioral health suite and emphasize the collaboration between medical and behavioral health providers. Student safety is their utmost priority and they convey this by showing the separate entrance that students use to enter the clinic. This virtual clinic tour can make youth feel more comfortable and allay concerns about confidentiality, what to expect, and how to access services at their health center.

View the [Kerman Unified Valley Community Health Center Virtual Tour!](#)

Website: vht.org

