



Program Overview

MPX is a virus that causes flu-like symptoms and a rash. MPX can be passed from person to person through prolonged skin-to-skin contact (kissing, hugging, cuddling, dancing, sexual contact) with a person who has the virus or by touching or sharing clothes, bedsheets, needles, or towels with someone who is infected. It is spread through contact with scabs, rash, and bodily fluids. It can also be spread by respiratory droplets (from coughing or sneezing), but this is less likely unless individuals are sharing space. MPX and the MPX vaccine have existed for over 50 years.

Racial and ethnic minority groups and people experiencing homelessness have faced a long history of medical discrimination and negative interactions with medical services. This can contribute to mistrust and healthcare hesitancy. As communities activate their MPX response and prevention, responders need to be intentional about adopting MPX response processes and practices that do not create or exacerbate barriers for marginalized populations.

To build vaccine confidence, communities should consider hiring MPX education ambassadors to engage people experiencing homelessness and homeless service providers by facilitating two-way communication and disseminating accurate information about prevention (including vaccination), testing, treatment, and care.

This strategy is rooted in the same principles guiding the [rapidly growing peer workforce](#) that has been integral in behavioral health services: a commitment to engaging people with a strengths-based and [trauma-informed approach](#) that builds respect and mutual understanding. The [ambassador concept](#) has been used to build trust and support among community members to help them make informed decisions about preventing MPX.

Who Are Education Ambassadors?

An MPX education ambassador is a paid employee who provides education about the MPX virus, symptoms, and prevention by sharing personal and real-world experiences. Similar to peer specialists, this role should be filled by those with lived relevant experience (i.e., experiences of having had MPX or getting vaccinated) who are trusted community members, including:

- People with lived experience of homelessness who can engage people living in shelters or in unsheltered locations.
- Homeless service provider staff who can engage other staff members.
- Community organizers.
- Faith leaders.
- Other trusted community members who engage people experiencing homelessness, such as librarians and meal program volunteers.

Key Considerations

- Employ MPX education ambassadors to engage people experiencing homelessness and staff before a vaccine event; plan for enough lead time to support meaningful two-way communication and opportunities to elevate and address concerns.
- Hire people with lived experience of homelessness as MPX education ambassadors and pay them equitably for their time.
- Hire and utilize staff from historically marginalized communities to facilitate trust and meaningful engagement among people experiencing homelessness and Black, Indigenous, people of color, Latino/a/x, and LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Hire culturally competent staff that speak the language used in the community.
- Train MPX education ambassadors on expectations and ways to protect themselves from MPX, including avoiding close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like MPX.
- Provide ambassadors with appropriate personal protective equipment if needed.
- Educate MPX education ambassadors about [individuals at risk](#) of contracting MPX. MPX can be transmitted through all types of close physical contact, sharing utensils, or prolonged face-to-face contact with someone who has MPX. [Anyone can get MPX](#).
- [MPX is not related to COVID-19](#). However, similar disease prevention strategies work for both COVID-19 and MPX. Best practices suggest that MPX education ambassadors mask up, wash hands, never share personal items, and socially distance when possible.

Funding Options

- Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) annual or ESG Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (ESG-CV) program funds
 - Emergency shelter component: Education ambassadors may be funded under case management as part of activities related to the provision of shelter-based services.
 - Street outreach component: Education ambassadors may be funded under engagement or case management as part of activities related to the provision of street outreach.
- Continuum of Care (CoC) program funds
 - Case management: Education ambassadors may be funded under case management as part of activities related to the provision of information and referrals to other providers.
 - Outreach services: Education ambassadors may be funded under outreach services as part of activities related to engagement and connecting people with information and referrals to homeless and mainstream housing programs.
- Private and philanthropic funds

Sample Job Description

This section includes a sample job description that communities could adapt to employ people with lived experience of homelessness as MPX education ambassadors.

Job Summary

MPX education ambassadors will provide ongoing outreach to people experiencing homelessness to increase understanding of the MPX virus, prevention strategies, access to testing and treatment, and vaccine confidence. MPX education ambassadors will provide education regarding the origins of MPX and who can contract the virus. Ambassadors will disseminate clear and consistent information about prevention, including vaccination for those who are eligible, and facilitate two-way communication between people experiencing homelessness and public health and homelessness partners to support goals for equitable prevention. Ambassadors are people with lived experience of homelessness who provide peer support and can share real-world experiences.

Responsibilities and Duties

- Attend trainings to:
 - Gain a greater understanding of the MPX virus and current stigmas and misconceptions surrounding who can contract the virus.
 - Learn about prevention strategies, testing, and treatment.
 - Learn about the safety and efficacy of MPX vaccines.
- Provide ongoing outreach to people experiencing homelessness (through direct interactions and social media); provide MPX virus prevention strategies and pre-vaccination education; encourage people experiencing homelessness to visit a healthcare provider if they are exposed to the MPX virus or experience any symptoms associated with MPX; disseminate clear, consistent, and accurate information about vaccination including common side effects.
- Facilitate two-way communication between people experiencing homelessness, public health, and homeless sector partners to identify, elevate, and respond to any misunderstanding around who can contract the virus and concerns about vaccination, testing, or treatment among people experiencing homelessness.
- Engage people by listening and validating individuals' concerns and sharing personal reasons for confidence in vaccination.
- Accompany mobile health units to provide peer support, help people work through concerns, and liaise between people experiencing homelessness and healthcare providers.
- Participate in vaccination, testing, and treatment planning and coordination; provide an "ear to the ground," informing public health and homeless sector partners about equitable strategies; inform local communications and community engagement strategies.

- Talk to individuals about barriers to vaccination, testing, or treatment and support problem solving and help convey people's concerns to public health and healthcare partners to help them reduce barriers.
- Learn about best practices for vaccination (i.e., getting vaccinated within four days of being exposed to the virus) and help people experiencing homelessness navigate these recommendations to improve access (e.g., identify where vaccines will be given and support people experiencing homelessness to bring the right documentation and coordinate transportation).
- Utilize safety principles that model risk reduction (i.e., avoiding skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a rash that looks like small pimples or blisters, regular handwashing).
- Support individuals who require isolation by connecting them to community resources to meet their needs to stay in isolation.

Qualifications

You will be successful in this job if you:

- Have lived experience of homelessness and are connected to people in the community.
- Have cultural humility and experience working with diverse populations of people experiencing homelessness.
- Have strong interpersonal and communication skills and an open, friendly, accommodating attitude.
- Are willing to learn about the MPX virus, common vaccine hesitancies, and other MPX risk reduction strategies.
- Are well-versed in harm reduction principles and trauma-informed care.

Salary

Identify a salary range commensurate with the importance of the position in the community and the skills required to be effective.