

Research Summary: Community Advisory Boards Strengthen Partner and Patient Voice in Community Health Centers

- Community advisory boards (CABs) help health centers include patient and community voices in decision-making.
- This study examined the experiences of four community advisory boards in Massachusetts that supported health centers in expanding COVID-19 testing.
- The study found that community members and staff were very engaged. Interviews showed that trust and mutual respect helped make CABs successful.
- **To support more health centers, we've developed a toolkit for creating and maintaining effective community advisory boards.**



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WHO PARTICIPATED

- Community partners and staff engaged in community advisory boards at **four health centers in Massachusetts**



WHAT WE DID



- Surveyed 20 people about the strength and quality of their engagement.
- Conducted in-depth interviews with 13 of those surveyed to get their recommendations for starting a community advisory board.
- Collected feedback from 17 additional health center staff at an online learning community meeting.
- Analyzed costs for developing and sustaining CABs.
- Created a toolkit to help health centers.

WHAT'S IN THE TOOLKIT?

A step-by-step guide to help health centers create community advisory boards. It includes:

- **Leadership Structure** – Tips on selecting a leadership model, choosing a chair, and defining roles.
- **Recruitment Strategies** – Guidance for identifying and engaging diverse community members.
- **Meeting Planning and Facilitation** – Best practices for organizing, leading, and documenting productive meetings.
- **Decision-Making and Prioritization** – Strategies to help set goals and focus on issues important to community partners and patients.
- **Budgeting and Sustainability** – Cost estimates for running a community advisory board (around \$8,000 per year) and strategies to support long-term success.
- **Evaluation Tools** – Surveys and interview guides to assess engagement and measure impact.
- **Stories from Community Members** – Testimonials highlighting members' experiences.
- **Templates** – Resources to guide meetings, decision-making, and engagement.

