CHCF C19 CHIP Summary

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CHIP Title: Maximizing the PPE Available for Los Angeles County Workforce during COVID-19

Project Description:

- My CHIP project focuses on conservation of personal protective equipment (PPE) for the 23,000 workforce members in the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The objective was to find new ways to extend our existing supply of PPE, identify safe and effective alternatives, and secure new supply that met agency standards.
- Emphasis is on the decontamination or re-processing of N95 respirators, as there was a critical supply shortage of N95s at the onset of the pandemic.
- I review the operational phases: discovery, obtaining buy-in or negotiations, and implementation; and discuss what guided our decision-making at each phase.
- 250,000 N95 respirators were generated to replenish the depleted emergency stockpile for our LA County healthcare workforce as a direct result of my CHIP project.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned:

- Don't let enthusiasm and good intentions get in the way of due diligence.
- At the beginning, invest your time in multiple options and cast a wide net.
- Engage labor partners early and often.

Next Steps:

- Gap analysis identified scant scientific research on the re-processing of disposable N95 respirators, with only 1 article published 10 years ago by Battelle, the vendor that LA County ultimately partnered with.
- Lack of evidence-based research was a significant barrier to implementation and use of these decontaminated respirators.
- The weakness in that Battelle study was that research was performed on new, unworn N95s.
- It would be valuable to have clinical studies that similarly matched the conditions of our workforce, to determine the effects of decontaminating N95 respirators worn for up to 12hrs.