

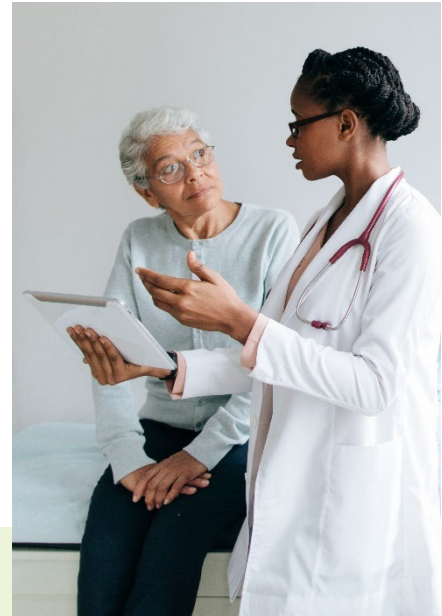
VALLEY FEVER ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH PLAN

The following outreach plan can be used to engage local partners, community leaders, and other stakeholders about Valley fever.

SET GOALS FOR ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

Before reaching out to local partners, consider what you would like to accomplish through your efforts. Some goals may include:

- Educate the community about Valley fever, how it is acquired, its symptoms, and the risks
- Raise awareness about the impact of Valley fever in your county, health jurisdiction, or community
- Partner on an outreach effort
- Highlight local resources



WHO TO ENGAGE

Anyone who lives, works, or travels in an area where Valley fever has been reported can be infected, even healthy adults and children. As such, consider engaging a wide variety of community organizations, institutions, and partners in your community, including those organizations that may work directly with [groups at higher risk of severe disease](#):

- County health departments
- Hospitals and providers
- Maternal and infant health organizations
- Senior organizations
- Community centers
- Community-based organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Colleges and universities
- Media outlets
- Employers, unions, and other organizations associated with outdoor workers (construction, agriculture, mining, etc.)
- Elected officials

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KEY MESSAGES TO CONVEY

The following messages are intended for stakeholders and community leaders who are either unaware of Valley fever, or are aware of Valley fever, but are not familiar with the potential impacts of Valley fever in their area.

- Valley fever (also called coccidioidomycosis or “cocci”) is a disease caused by a fungus that grows in the soil and dirt in some areas of California. People and animals can get sick when they breathe in dust that contains the Valley fever fungus. Some people with Valley fever may develop severe disease.
- Valley fever is on the rise – the number of Valley fever cases in California has greatly increased in recent years.
- Most cases of Valley fever in California are reported in people who live in the Central Valley or Central Coast, but Valley fever has been diagnosed in people living throughout California. More and more cases have also been recently reported in Central and Southern California, suggesting that cases of Valley fever are becoming common in more areas of California.
- Research shows that cases of Valley fever in California increase after a rainy winter that follows a drought. As California experiences more drought because of climate change, Valley fever could continue to increase.
- Anyone can get Valley fever, but certain people have a higher risk of becoming infected, especially those who spend more time outdoors and are exposed to dirt and dust. Other groups have a higher risk of developing severe disease and being hospitalized if they are infected.
- Valley fever symptoms (such as cough, fever, and fatigue) are similar to those of other common respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. But symptoms of Valley fever may last a month or longer. Laboratory tests are needed to determine if symptoms are caused by COVID-19 or Valley fever.
- Because Valley fever and COVID-19 share many of the same symptoms, cases of Valley fever (which can also cause lasting illness and disease) may have been under-counted during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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- Healthcare providers usually need to order a blood test or other tests (such as a chest X-ray) to help diagnose Valley fever.
- You cannot treat Valley fever with over-the-counter medications, but in some cases, a doctor may prescribe specific medications to treat Valley fever, particularly if the disease is severe.
- Misconceptions about Valley fever exist. Local organizations can help raise awareness and help correct misconceptions about Valley fever at the community level.
- The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has developed outreach and educational materials about Valley fever to inform individuals and communities that may be at risk. Visit [CouldBeValleyFever.org](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Imz00001.aspx).

KEY QUESTIONS FOR PARTNERS

Once you have connected with key individuals and organizations, here are some questions to ask:

- Can the organization add the topic of Valley fever to its meeting agendas, when appropriate?



- Does the organization know local residents who have a story to tell about Valley fever?
- Can the organization distribute key messages and digital resources to their community members or followers?
- Can the organization introduce you to other partners, especially those who work directly with the most [at-risk populations](#), such as people over age 60, pregnant women, and people who are Black or Filipino?
- Does the organizational representative have relationships with local media outlets that would be interested in developing stories about Valley fever?

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HOSTING A COMMUNITY FORUM

Forums are effective ways to have discussions, answer questions, and build awareness about Valley fever. Consider enlisting multiple partners to co-host listening sessions where community members can share their experiences about Valley fever with public health partners that represent credible and relevant organizations in the community. The sessions should be scheduled for times when the most participants can attend (which may be outside of regular working hours) and should be advertised by each partner. Key attendees should be invited personally by a partner, and the importance of their presence should be conveyed.



Make sure there is ample time to share during the session, but also allow time for action items and next steps to be discussed and agreed upon. A sample **Community Forum Agenda** is included in this outreach plan.

ENGAGING LOCAL MEDIA

It is crucial that, as a community, people become more aware of the seriousness of Valley fever. Local media outlets are an essential way of delivering this important information. Strategize with partners about who is best positioned to reach out to local media on the issue. Some components to consider for a media pitch include:

- Highlighting a community member's experience with Valley fever
- Featuring a healthcare provider talking about Valley fever from a local perspective
- Issuing a news release during Valley Fever Awareness Month or other key times when cases might be high – see sample **Valley Fever News Release** included in the [CDPH Valley Fever Awareness and Outreach Toolkit](#).

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THE POWER OF REAL STORIES



Sharing the stories of real people who have had Valley fever is a powerful way to make the issue relevant and understood. Consider featuring these individuals and their stories in their own words at meetings with stakeholders and when conducting outreach with local media outlets.



Always ask permission before sharing personal stories or referencing an individual's experience from the community, and suggest that the individual can remain anonymous if preferred.

SAMPLE AGENDA: COMMUNITY FORUM

1. Welcome and brief description of the purpose of the event

- “To share our experiences of Valley fever and to brainstorm ways of working together to address Valley fever in our community. We encourage problem-solving conversations and partnering with others.”

2. Introductions

3. Overview of the problem, including statistics/data

- How can someone get Valley fever?
- What are the symptoms?
- How many people get Valley fever in California every year? How many of those get hospitalized or die from the disease?
- Are some groups at higher risk of getting Valley fever, or getting very sick from Valley fever if infected?

4. Story/stories from community member(s) impacted by Valley fever

5. Perspective from a local provider

6. Overview of CDPH’s Could Be Valley Fever resources available

7. Facilitated discussion

- What have been some shared and individual experiences with Valley fever?
- Who in our community is most at risk?
- What is the most important information to provide? Are new resources needed to convey this information?
- What are the best ways to reach people most at risk, as well as the general population?

8. Wrap-up – discussion of next steps