

Santa Barbara County 2021 CSAC Challenge Executive Summary
Santa Barbara County COVID-19 Education and Compliance Taskforce

Overview:

To protect community safety the Education and Compliance Taskforce was established to interpret and uniformly enforce local and state COVID-19 protection measures.

Challenge:

Santa Barbara County has eight cities, several state and federal properties, and unincorporated county areas that all have unique compliance and enforcement procedures. As Health Officer Orders, Governor Executive Orders and various regulatory guidance or requirements were issued and updated frequently, it was left to local government to educate the residential and business community, as well as enforce the intent of the requirements. Unfortunately, interpretations quickly became inconsistent and enforcement was difficult in such a changing dynamic environment. Additionally, elected officials and various government organizations started to receive complaints of non-compliance within the community with no standardized method for these complaints to be addressed. Without collaboration and an agreed upon process, community members and businesses continued to violate protective measures putting our entire county at risk the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19.

Solution:

Santa Barbara County is a medium sized suburban county with separate local, state and federal jurisdictions, a diverse population, and significant socio-economic differences across the area. The changing dynamic of COVID-19 protections, various enforcement agencies and the diversity of our community could have created the perfect storm for confusion and inconsistency with enforcement of protective measures. The COVID-19 Education and Compliance Taskforce was formed with the goal of bringing all jurisdictions together to agree on interpretation of protective measures, discuss challenges, ask questions of each other, and support one another. The Taskforce was comprised of representatives of: 8 cities, multiple county departments (including Office of Emergency Management, Environmental Health Services, District Attorney's Office and Sheriff), State Parks, and additional governmental and nongovernmental entities as needed. A common education and enforcement strategy was developed and adopted with an education focused approach. The Taskforce leaned heavily on each other during situations where community cooperation was waning and strategized on ways to gain compliance throughout the county. The Taskforce tied in with local chamber organizations and state regulatory entities to multiply their ability to spread the educational message.

Additionally, a singular county-wide web-based location for public complaints was established. This online complaint form allowed community members to file a complaint, as well as post any photographic evidence they felt was important. Complaints were then assigned to the appropriate jurisdiction or agency for follow up, and responses were documented into the same system. Another benefit of this complaint system was it allowed the Taskforce to easily identify sectors that needed additional guidance, education or outreach. This enabled the county to work with the Joint Information Center to better target outreach and educational materials specific to that sector, and/or to deploy RISE Ambassadors for direct outreach.

Innovation:

Utilizing a single platform (a Smartsheet form posted to our COVID-19 Response and Recovery websites) to receive and track complaints and the establishment of a multi-agency taskforce allowed all jurisdictions to work together more efficiently and enhance public health efforts.

Results:

Through the COVID-19 Education and Outreach Taskforce nearly 4,000 complaints regarding businesses and social gatherings were successfully resolved. From March of 2020 through June 2021 only three Administrative Citations were issued for violations of the Health Officer Order. This program provided an opportunity for all the jurisdictions to be confident and supported in their approach.

Replicability:

Although this particular Smartsheet was specifically created for COVID enforcement, the general concepts of collaborative multi-agency taskforce and a Smartsheet based form for community input is easily replicable. This could be a best practice for any multi-agency effort that has the need for community input, recommendations or a complaint process. The Taskforce allowed those agencies who had influence within the community to make positive connections and provide uniform information around an ever-changing situation. The County is happy to provide copies of the Smartsheet set-up, as well as the Education and Enforcement Policy upon request. It would be easy to replicate in any location.

Program Contact:

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