

RELIEF FOR COMMUNITIES PARALYZED BY FEAR

THROUGH ECHO-SGV

By Kimberly Hernandez, Community Health Worker

The street was calm that afternoon in El Monte, CA, but the quiet didn't reflect how people were feeling. When our ECHO-SGV team approached Maria's home, we were met with a cautious voice from behind the screen: "¿Quién es?" meaning "Who is it?"

She didn't open the door at first. Recently, ICE agents visited her block twice, leaving families on edge and reshaping how they navigated their neighborhood. Our team of community health workers often heard about it on the news but now witnessed the aftermaths directly.



After we introduced ourselves and explained what our Community Public Health Team does, Maria slowly felt comfortable enough to share her concerns. As community health workers, we approached the interaction with trauma-informed care, validating her and her community's fears, and creating a space where she felt heard.

Through conversation, we learned she needed support with transportation to attend her medical appointments. Although her formal referral would take a couple of days to process, we didn't want her to face further delays in accessing care. Before leaving, we provided her with a Metro TAP card preloaded with \$40. As she received it, her shoulders relaxed, her expression softened, and a hint of relief came over her.

This encounter is a powerful reminder that public health extends beyond clinical care settings. It lives in our neighborhoods, on our doorsteps, and in the everyday challenges that shape people's ability to feel safe and connected to care.

She thanked us quietly, but the relief in her voice stays with me.



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