

CienciaPR establishes multi-sectoral partnerships to educate about COVID-19 and promote vaccination ^[1]

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Edmy Ayala Rosado, science communication specialist for CienciaPR and coordinator for Aquí Nos Cuidamos (left) and Hon. Rafael “Tatito” Hernández, president of the Puerto Rico House of Representatives (right) during the signature of the agreement.

Recognizing the complexity of the response to the local COVID-19 epidemic in Puerto Rico, the non-profit organization Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR) has established more than a dozen multi-sectoral partnerships with non-profit organizations, community entities and government agencies. The purpose of these partnerships is to strengthen the capacity of their responses, particularly around COVID-19 education, prevention and vaccination promotion, using CienciaPR's COVID-19 education toolkit, Aquí Nos Cuidamos.

Today, Thursday, the organization signed a collaboration agreement with the Puerto Rico House of Representatives.

"For us it is extremely important to partner with other groups, organizations and governmental entities to complement their COVID-19 education, prevention and vaccination promotion efforts and at the same time enhance our impact. The Aquí Nos Cuidamos Multimedia Toolkit is applicable to any organizational, municipal or community strategy. Our Toolkit makes it easy to educate with clear, scientific and culturally relevant messages to diverse communities. This type of educational effort is something that should be a priority for everyone, especially in the complex situation we are in, with the variants and rampant misinformation about vaccines," explained project coordinator, science communicator and journalist Edmy Ayala Rosado. Ayala Rosado was present at the signing of the agreement with the House of Representatives, representing Aquí Nos Cuidamos and CienciaPR.

"With this collaboration, the House of Representatives leads efforts to accurately communicate the strategies recommended by the Puerto Rican scientific community, in order to urge citizens to protect themselves against COVID-19 and its variants. The efforts of "Aquí Nos Cuidamos" are essential tools to continue working on the new challenges that this public health emergency has brought us. We urge citizens to continue with the correct use of masks, physical distancing and vaccination. It is important to continue promoting assertive conversations about the prevention and detection of the coronavirus," said Rafael "Tatito" Hernández, president of the Puerto Rico House of Representatives.

In addition to the House of Representatives, Ciencia Puerto Rico has signed collaborative agreements for the use of Aquí Nos Cuidamos with entities such as True Self Foundation, Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico, Asociación Puertorriqueña de Consejería Profesional, Puerto Rico National Chamber of Commerce, Asociación de Psicología de Puerto Rico and the Municipality of Villalba, through its Municipal System of Case Investigation and Contact Tracing. Other collaborators of Aquí Nos Cuidamos include Taller Salud, Es Mental magazine, Fundación Atención Atención, Center for a New Economy, Instituto Nueva Escuela, Puerto Rico Public Health Trust, Mercy Corps and VOCES PR.

The organization is in talks with the Association and Federation of Mayors to establish similar alliances with as many municipalities as possible around the archipelago.

"We urge any group, agency or organization that wishes to use the Aquí Nos Cuidamos Collection, whether for their social networks, internal use or for campaigns and health fairs, to contact us by writing to comunicaciones@cienciapr.org [3]. Our content is free of charge for them to make them their own," Ayala Rosado concluded.

About Ciencia Puerto Rico

Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR, www.cienciapr.org [4]) is a global community of more than 15,000 scientists, students, educators and allies who believe that science can empower people with the knowledge, capacity and agency to improve their lives and society. The organization leverages its rich and diverse community—the largest collective of people interested in science and Puerto Rico in the world—to democratize science, and transform science education and professional training for scientists. Since 2006, CienciaPR has successfully engaged and trained scientists, students, and educators, and created culturally relevant resources and educational experiences that improve students' attitudes and interests toward science and self-confidence in their scientific abilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CienciaPR has been making Puerto Rican experts visible, informing and educating the Puerto Rican public, and keeping the response to the emergency accountable. CienciaPR's efforts over the past decade have garnered multiple recognitions, including being named a "Bright Spot" for Hispanic education by the White House in 2015 and a "Science Defender" by the Union of Concerned Scientists in 2018.

About Aquí Nos Cuidamos

Aquí Nos Cuidamos is a project of Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR) that promotes COVID-19 prevention and the well-being of vulnerable and marginalized communities in Puerto Rico through science and solidarity. Among its efforts is the Aquí Nos Cuidamos Toolkit, a series of public service campaigns with educational content on science and public health. The Toolkit is based on the most recent scientific data contextualized to the Puerto Rican reality and culture. It has been developed by experts in science, public health and communication, with input from leaders, community organizations, non-profit entities, and the deaf community. The Aquí Nos Cuidamos Toolkit consists of infographics, animations, videos, audios, and written materials that present science in accessible and practical ways. All content in the Toolkit is available for open access use at www.aquinoscuidamos.org [5]. Aquí Nos Cuidamos also includes collaborative partnerships with organizations such as the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust, Taller Salud, Mercy Corps, and the Puerto Rico Psychology Association, among others; community outreach efforts such as workshops and a Community Ambassadors Program, which supports 10 Puerto Rican leaders in their efforts.

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