

CIVIC-FA Track B: Participatory Action Research to Enhance Equity and Prevent Moral Injury in Community Paramedicine

Project Challenge

In San Francisco and across the United States, community paramedicine (CP) programs respond to complex problems facing vulnerable populations, including residents experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental illness. While the populations they serve have experienced inequities, there is little known about how to evaluate and improve equity in access to these lifesaving services. In addition, in the context of inadequate resources and repeated traumatic exposures, community paramedics experience moral distress and injury. This civic-partnered participatory action research study aimed to assess and intervene on the interrelated issues of equity and moral injury at both the structural level and individual level.

Research Questions

- What is the scope of moral distress and injury among SFFD members?
- What intervention strategies prevent moral distress and injury and reduce their negative impacts among street response team members?
- Does a group-based intervention on equity improve community paramedics' understanding of diverse clients?
- Can a city-wide data integration strategy facilitate equity evaluation while reducing the field based data collection burden?

Pilot Outcomes

- The project quantitatively and qualitatively assessed moral injury among first responders, finding symptoms are common in this group.
- The team's peer conversations intervention on equity, ethics, and moral injury were well-received and are being sustained internally.
- SFFD conducted the first equity analysis of CP programs and San Francisco's All Street Outreach Integrated Datasets (ASTRID) data system will soon roll out, facilitating improved client care and system-level tracking, analysis, and modeling to enhance equity.
- The team hosted the first state-wide EMS data equity conference with participants from 22 counties and runs an ongoing Learning Community to build capacity for improving equity state-wide.
- The team has worked extensively with peer support specialists to document how peers can enhance street outreach and crisis work.

San Francisco, CA

NSF Award ID: 2322023

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Civic Partners:

- **San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD)**
- **Richmond Area Multi-Services Inc. (RAMS)**

Research Partners:

- **San José State University (SJSU)**
- **University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)**
- **San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System (SFVAHCS)**

Collaborative Team:

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