Informative Tele-Town Hall

Coronavirus. The Health of Our Families

English Transcription

[00:00:05.560] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Good afternoon, this is Nicole Suárez and I want to welcome you to the Telemundo and UnidosUS teleconference covering the coronavirus and the health of our families. We’d like to mention that this call will be recorded. We know that the whole world is currently living through the coronavirus pandemic that spreads without discriminating. At the same time, we are in a world of mass communication or, rather, an excess of information.

As it happens, too, many find it difficult to find reliable sources and that is why at Telemundo, this has been our greatest commitment to the Hispanic community. We extended our programming by creating a brand-new newscast at 11:35 p.m. We are also carrying out a series of specials on coronavirus and today – together with UnidosUS – we decided to host this call respecting the rules of social distancing.

With us today we have three experts from different areas of this great country. It is an honor to have Janet Murguía, president & CEO of UnidosUS since 2005, who works to make the voice of the Hispanic community heard. We also have Dr. Kathleen Page, a member of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins University. Aside from her medical work, she focuses on equal health rights for the migrant community.

We are also glad to welcome California’s 36th District Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz. The doctor was the first Latino to earn three Harvard degrees and has experience dealing with catastrophic situations.

So here we have our experts. We will hear from Janet Murguía first as she tells us what is happening to our community at this critical moment.

[00:02:37.950] - Janet Murguía (UnidosUS)

Thank you, Nicole. As the largest national Latino civil rights support and advocacy organization in the United States, one of our missions over the past 50 years at UnidosUS has been to provide vital information for our community. I can't think of a more important time for this than right now as we work with hundreds of community organizations every day and are connected with thousands of leaders across the country on issues like the economy, health and immigration.
Much of our job is to defend families, including the millions of Latino families living in this country. Last week, UnidosUS worked with congressional leaders on the stimulus bill to provide assistance such as unemployment benefits and state and local emergency funds that can help families of mixed-immigration status. One of those leaders joins us on this call, Congressman Raúl Ruiz, who is also a doctor. He’s going to talk more about the law that Congress just passed in a few moments, but UnidosUS will continue to work for more help and more funding at the national, state, and local levels, helping more families. Part of this work will be to ensure that bilingual information is available to all affected communities. That’s why we’ve asked our public health, congressional, and media allies to join us in providing the latest information about the coronavirus and answering your questions. I want to thank Dr. Kathleen Page and Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz for being with us and I would also like to thank our friends and allies at Telemundo for this transmission.

I know people are afraid. I know you’re worried about your loved ones. Some of you are worried about your work. I know there is a great anxiety about what is happening in our country. I share your fears and concerns. We may feel that this situation is beyond our control. But there are things we can all do. One is to stay calm and stay informed. While things are likely to get worse before they get better, each of us will need to have an impact for a better outcome in this crisis. I want you to think right now about how you can protect yourself, as well as your families, and help protect others. This starts with information and knowledge.

I would like to tell you what we are doing at UnidosUS through our national network. UnidosUS has a network of nearly 300 affiliates–community organizations across the country that serve millions of people every day, including health services. Some of these affiliates are among the most effective and respected health clinics in their area. I just want to mention a few working in the hardest-hit areas of the country:

- Urban Health Plan in New York City
- Sea Mar Health Centers in Seattle
- AltaMed Health Services in Los Angeles
- Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center in Northern California
- Mary’s Center in Washington D.C.
- Alivio Medical Center in Chicago

They are no longer one of the clinics that can help at this time, but for information about these organizations and others, visit our website UnidosUS.org.

At the end of this transmission we will explain how you can stay informed, including several web pages that you can visit to get the latest information and updates as we learn more about this virus. We must remember that we are in this together, so I leave you with these words: stay informed, stay safe, stay home if you can or practice physical distancing if you can’t. And you have to wash our hands. This is very important. And those of you who are on the front line, from nurses, doctors and other health personnel to community organizations, supermarket workers,
delivery men, field workers, all who are caring for our elders and our young people, we want to thank you all for fighting and letting us move forward at such a difficult time.

I hope that all of you will join me in expressing our deep gratitude. Now we will listen to the experts who are with us tonight and they will answer your questions. Nicole thank you very much and we will move on with the experts.

[00:09:09.560] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Janet thank you very much for the nice message and, as you said, we will get the medical perspective and for that we will talk to Dr. Kathleen Page. Doctor, tell us what is important for the Hispanic community to know about coronavirus.

[00:09:26.250] - Dr. Kathleen Page

Hi Nicole, thank you so much for inviting me. And, I’m going to reiterate what Janet just said. There are some public health guides and we’re going to repeat them back. Wash your hands, do not touch your face, and do as much social distancing as possible. But mainly, this is a very serious pandemic. It's important to take it seriously but there is no use in panicking. It's a serious thing, but panic isn't going to get us anywhere and I hope at the moment to be able to explain a little more to reassure everyone who may be a little nervous, which is logical because the situation is very serious.

The other point I want to make is that the vast majority of people who get infected with the coronavirus have mild symptoms. It's uncomfortable but luckily most people recover, and they can be treated at home. There is a type of people – about 20 percent or one in five people – who get more seriously ill and can develop with pneumonia.

These people have to call 911 or go to an emergency room. It is very important that someone who is feeling very bad, especially if they cannot breathe, call 911. Go to the emergency room, seek medical help and don’t be afraid. It doesn’t matter if you have insurance or not, or whether you have papers or not. It doesn’t matter. In an emergency situation, hospitals must treat the patient. So, the patient, in most cases, I hope is going to be able to handle it at home. But those with serious symptoms have to go to the emergency room.

And finally, I’m going to tell you a little bit about how this virus came about and where we are today. And I hope you can leave here with a sense of hope. In this situation, we all have to sacrifice a lot and it's very difficult for a lot of people, but I think we're seeing a little bit of hope at the end of all this.
I'm going to explain where this virus came from, as many people already know, originated in China. It is a virus that lived in animals and through a genetic change that occurred, it is something that we do not understand very well why, but there was a change that allowed this virus to infect humans. The first cases were reported in December in the city of Wuhan, where a group of patients with serious pneumonia was detected, and did not know much about it, but all these patients had contact with a wet market selling live animals.

That's when we got an alert coming to the health system and doctors. By January it was already identified that it was a new virus, called the coronavirus. The Chinese government, as many know, imposed a very, very strict quarantine in the city of Wuhan to control this situation, because it was making very rapid progress in a huge country of 1.2 billion people. So, we've learned a lot, a lot about this virus. We still have more to learn, but here we've learned a lot.

As I said at the beginning, the first thing is that, for most people – in 80 percent of cases – it causes an uncomfortable but not very serious flu that can be handled in the house. In 20 percent of people, which is something we don't understand very well, the virus is not only deposited in the nose and presents flu-like symptoms, but it goes through the lungs and there it causes pneumonia.

And this is then more serious because having pneumonia means the patient can't breathe well, needs oxygen and these patients require medical attention. Now I want to talk a little bit about the mortality of this virus because when you turn on the television and the news, et cetera, all I heard is about death, and it's a real thing, there have been a lot of deaths. But I want to put it a little bit in perspective. Mortality, the number of people dying from this virus, is about 3 to 5 percent in countries where there is medical care, as in the United States. What does this mean? That of 100 people who catch the virus, three unfortunately die. In some demographics, for example, the people most at risk are those over the age of 75, those with diabetes or with heart, lung or autoimmune problems, as well as people who are receiving chemotherapy for cancer. Their mortality rate is a little higher, about 10 percent of older people or those with serious health problems, die when they acquire the coronavirus. Well, this sounds high and it is. And it is a much higher death rate than the flu, where one in 1,000 people die.

[00:15:08.400] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Doctor, how much longer is this crisis going to last?

[00:15:12.930] - Dr. Kathleen Page
This crisis is going to last a few more months. Why? Because the most important thing about this virus is that it causes a high mortality compared to influenza, but not as much as Ebola. Ebola causes a mortality of 50 percent, one in two people who gets Ebola dies. That is very high.

The problem with coronavirus is that it is super super contagious, so the number of people who can become infected is very large if we do not take public health measures. This virus is transmitted, as we have heard a lot, through droplets and through contact.

So how do you transmit it? When we all talk, we all take a few drops, a droplet spray. You don't see them exactly. In the cold or places with cold weather, when we talk about a cloud of breath, these are the droplets we are talking about and the coronavirus travels in these droplets. This cloud advances about a meter and a half and then falls to the ground. That's why we have this important recommendation of physical estrangement that people stand about two meters, about 6 feet, because by separating those droplets in this way they do not reach the other person and the other person does not become infected.

It is also transmitted when the droplets fall to the surface. Then people may be near contaminated surfaces and get infected. It is estimated that for every one person who has the coronavirus will infect two or three people. So, coming back to your question Nicole, how long is this going to last? It all depends on how much we can lower how many infections each person causes. So, let's say that a person, if we do nothing, if we do nothing, one person infects two, four, six or more people the next day, then this grows exponentially and continues to infect the majority of the population. What we're doing now -- and it's very, very difficult -- is to quarantine yourself. Why do we do it? Because every time a person becomes infected, seven people stay in the house and suddenly infect family members, but it doesn't infect more than that. We can prevent it from being transmitted and to continue to spread. But what's the point of really being able to interrupt this, there's going to be that these measures are going to have to be in this place for at least a month and a half.

We've seen it in China, that when they did very strict quarantine it took about two months until they stopped giving infections inside the city. So, I'd say we have at least two months ahead of trying to contain this, until we finally see that all this is coming down.

[00:18:31.920] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Without a doubt, and even if it is difficult, we all have to do our part to contribute. But unfortunately, not all of us can stay home. What recommendations do you have for people who need to leave to work, such as nurses, supermarket workers and also day laborers, among many others?
[00:18:52.680] - Dr. Kathleen Page

The main recommendation you've seen since this all started is to wash your hands. It is simple, but very important. This virus, although it is very serious, is very weak. Soap dissolves it in two kicks, then an everyday soap, it does not have to be an alcoholic gel, which suddenly no longer exists or is difficult to obtain, because everyday soap eliminates the virus.

Then, when washing their hands, if a person has to go out, washing their hands as much as possible helps a lot. The other thing is that the virus enters, infects us through the nose, mouth or eyes. It's important not to touch your face, it's not so easy not to touch your face, but it's important because if you don't touch your face, the virus can't infect us.

And finally, to the people who are leaving, as much as possible, to practice physical estrangement. I mean, we in the hospital, now that we're working, we have to work, whether we're in meetings or we're in public places, we're all estranged. It's kind of weird because when we had meetings we're super separated, but this is super important because remember that I just told you that this spreads via a droplet spray and if we distance ourselves, at least if the other person is infected, it doesn't infect us.

The other recommendation is to cover your mouth with a mask, and if you don't have a mask, a scarf or something. And I say it not so much to protect yourself, because in reality, unless it is a very airtight mask of the type used in the hospital is not necessarily going to protect you from the virus, because the virus, as I said, can enter through the eyes or on the other side, but it's to protect others and that is what we should try to do is protect more people. Because putting something on your mouth is much less likely to spit out these droplets that transmit the virus and the virus will be deposited everywhere.

[00:21:14.220] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

I heard a news story where they are considering recommending that the general public use masks or eye caps precisely to prevent the spread of the virus and so the virus doesn't come home with you.

[00:21:19.590] - Dr. Kathleen Page

This is an important measure. Let's say there are two different cases. If we're seeing coronavirus patients who know they have coronavirus, there's a whole protocol of the kind of equipment we have to wear and when we get out of this and change our clothes, but that's special cases where
we're in intensive care, seeing patients we already know have coronavirus. The rest, for example, I had a clinic or was in the hospital, but I wasn't seeing patients with coronavirus.

Actually, when I came back to the house, what I did was wash my hands well, because this is the most important thing. I didn't want to bring the virus from my hands. This virus is not like it's going to be, it's not going to be everywhere. So, I think for people who have to go out to work is that the most important thing is that when they come back, they wash their hands well. This is my recommendation and what I do.

[00:22:13.860] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

What about washing your shoes or bathing after coming home, do you recommend something like that?

[00:22:19.280] - Dr. Kathleen Page

No, we're not really doing that. There have been a few reports in the news, that the virus survives a lot of time on different surfaces. This data came out of studies, which has some methodological problems and was very artificial. We, on a day-to-day basis in our normal life, just need to wash our hands.

Of course, I want to clarify, it is different if I'm seeing a patient who has coronavirus. For them we use a different type of equipment and change when we leave work. But when I'm at work, let's say seeing patients who don't have coronavirus or doing normal work, all I do is wash my hands.

[00:01:51.820] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Very good, thank you! Also, as we have seen, the number of cases in the United States continues to increase, around the world, but there are also people recovering from the disease. Are they usually left with some physical problems or, on the contrary, are they immunized?

[00:23:05.060] - Dr. Kathleen Page
An excellent question. And the truth is, we don’t have the answer because it hasn’t been enough time yet. I think we have learned a lot from the Chinese, because the country of China was the one that went through this first and now they are lifting quarantine restrictions. There are many infected people and we hope that having been infected will cause immunization for the next infection. In general, that is the case in the experience we have with similar viruses. But it is not known for sure because we have not had enough time to know. I think we’ll know that in about two months, once there’ll be a little more information coming from Wuhan and see if there are cases of people who had the virus and got infected twice or not, but hopefully not.

Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

And let’s hope the situation improves very soon. I want to take this opportunity to thank you and other doctors and nurses, cleaners, maintenance people, all who work tirelessly fighting the virus to protect us, who are also risking their lives and that of their family.

So, thank you, thank you with all our heart. How about we do something different, if we all start a world clap for them, to say thank you? Bravo, bravo. Infinite thanks for everything they do, really.

Well, let’s now switch to the next topic with our next expert to talk about how the coronavirus is causing an economic crisis for millions of people. Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz will explain to us what help the government is providing and who it will reach. Dr. Ruiz, Congressman Ruiz, Latinos own 4.4 million businesses that contribute $7.7 billion to the economy annually in this country. Will there be any help for these small businesses?

Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz

Yes, the answer to this question is that there will be help for small and large business owners, there will also be help for individuals. The families too, as well as the workers and those who are unemployed will receive help.

My name is Raúl Ruiz, I represent California’s 36th district in Southern California. I am the son of farmers, grew up in Coachella and studied medicine and public health with a focus on disaster care and also worked in the emergency room during the H1N1 pandemic in 2009. I am very, very carefully following the news and the scientists who are giving us information and trying to give not only hope, but also advice to our community, especially Latinos, to take care of themselves.

We do know that there is a category that we have talked about and Dr. Page talked about older people, aged 65 and over. People, no matter age, who have diabetes, who have heart, lung
problems and also weak immune systems, and we know that our Latino community often struggles to survive.

We have a shortage of doctors or clinics in our communities and we suffer economic inequities and also in health care. That is why the different vulnerable communities are the poor communities, the Latino communities that often suffer from diabetes, suffer from heart or lung diseases, especially young people with asthma, asthma in certain circumstances of poverty there are very high rates.

That's why we need to listen to Dr. Page and take the necessary precautions. Now, in terms of the economy, it is very important to know that the size of the recession and the time that the economic blow will last directly depends on the scale of the coronavirus transmission and also the time it takes for the coronavirus to spread within our community.

So, to avoid the economic blow, we need to focus quickly and aggressively to decrease transmission and that includes staying at home and not traveling. If you don't have jobs in essential industries, then don't conglomerate in person in groups of more than 10 people and when you’re outside or in groups, keep your distance of 6 feet or more.

So that's very important. Now in terms of legislation and congressional help for the community, we passed two bills focusing on emergency aid. $100 billion dollars to help not only doctors with what is needed to take care of themselves so that they can produce more tests and more products and help hospitals, but also to help families follow the precautions recommended by the CDC, the Centers for Disease Prevention.

So, we need that help to keep the community healthy and so they can also survive financially while they have to stay at home. There are five parts of the latest bill. One is the part where they will send the money to families who have a social security number and who filed their taxes.

People who earn $75,000 or less will receive $1,200 and for couples earning less than $150,000 a year, they will receive $2,400. For every child under the age of 16, they will receive $500 for each child. Now that's the first part, which is going to come from the IRS. The second part is the increase in unemployment insurance. First there's going to be more than $100 billion that's going to go to different states. The eligibility duration will be increased by more than three months and the unemployment check that people will receive will be increased by $600 a week plus what the state is going to give them for unemployment. This is the second part. The third part is the bill that will give $100 billion to hospitals that are struggling to fight coronavirus. There is also $355 billion going to small businesses that are suffering. And there are $500 billion going to big businesses, with limits that don’t allow millionaires and billionaires to benefit from this. The millionaire and billionaire owners have to give and invest their money on things that are going to increase wages and profits. There is even transparency to ensure that money will directly help keep workers’ jobs and salaries. So, those are the five points. I am available to answer questions, also in terms of health. I have many videos on my website. Ruiz.house.gov, where I talk about coronavirus and giving recommendations in Spanish. I also have them on
Facebook, because it is very important that we have the information in Spanish for our community. I thank Telemundo, UnidosUS and also Dr. Page, who are working hard and are leaders in informing the community.

[00:33:06.100] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Congressman Ruiz, it is early April. There are many families who will not be able to pay the mortgages or rents this month. What can you do for them?

[00:33:19.540] - Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz

The federal government passed an order that any homeowner who has a mortgage, and their payments are insured under the federal system, that they will not close their accounts or send for foreclosure. There are also certain governors who have made a moratorium on the evictions of people who are paying rents and also help those people who own apartments or their homes, who are renting. So that all depends on your county and your state.

[00:34:15.940] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

It probably changes from region to region, but I've also received social media messages from people who say they've called their bank to ask for extra time to pay the mortgage or rent, and it wasn't granted. Is there something they can do? Can they report it somewhere?

[00:34:34.880] - Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz

Well, that depends on where they live. For example, in the state of California, Governor Newsom spoke with banks and big banks made the commitment that people who can't pay their bills during the coronavirus pandemic, will be forgiven. But there are certain banks that have not yet said they're going to do it. So that's going to depend on your state and your county. If your governor said it's on the governor's orders, then call the governor's office.

[00:35:28.860] - Janet Murguía (UnidosUS)
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Also, Nicole, I wanted to add that many of our affiliate organizations are going to be willing to help many of our communities on these issues with their mortgages and loan installments that they may not be able to meet in these months. We are trying right now to work with big banks, and financial institutions, which we may want to include in a program to help, as we did after the 2009 recession. We are trying to work with our affiliate network who have some way to help with information and negotiate something with financial institutions. More information will be found on our website (www.UnidosUS.org) and I also advise everyone to visit our website to see which of our affiliate organizations are there in your area to help on these important issues.

[00:36:59.320] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Alright, thank you very much, Janet. We should keep these resources in mind. Congressman, we should mention that according to a study by the Pew Research Center, 83 percent of Latinos think that Covid19 is a strong threat to their personal finances. How can the government protect Latinos?

[00:37:21.390] - Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz

Look, this is a good question. That's why I talked about money directly to families with a social security number. There is also help with unemployment insurance. It also helps a lot by reaching out to organizations like food banks and those who use food stamps to eat. WIC programs (women's, babies and children's food), programs within senior centers to deliver food, and there are different childcare programs and also money for schools so they can still provide food and nutrition for children.

In terms of the undocumented community there are different methods where people can engage with organizations under the U.S. network and also under their local organizations, which are food banks, which are non-governmental organizations that are helping with funding, with money to help families also in different states. For example, in California, anyone who qualifies can get Medi-Cal health insurance in order to receive health care. Those are the different ways. Most of the community goes to community health centers. Community centers will also be receiving help to provide health care.

[00:39:05.040] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

And what if this continues after May, will the government continue to offer some help? Is there any plan for that?
[00:39:11.850] - Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz

We've even been on the phone lately talking about the fourth bill to increase protections for families and also to increase money. Because this is going to last and it's important to know that the more we take care of ourselves and take precautions as soon as possible, we're going to work with the economy and get back to work and help build jobs so that we can immediately put the community to work.

[00:39:50.040] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Congressman Ruiz, you are from Coachella Valley, you have neighbors, family there still, how are you reacting to all this coronavirus? Is your community in shock?

[00:40:01.310] - Congressman Dr. Raúl Ruiz

Look, I've been sounding the alarm not only locally, but with the federal government from the beginning, they take it more seriously. There were people who aren't taking it seriously, who are comparing it to the flu or saying why so much coverage for this when a lot of people are dying from car accidents.

But it must be understood that, as Dr. Page said, this virus is very easily transmitted and can cause certain people, one in five, to become severely ill. Also, people who are healthy and young can also get severely sick in fewer numbers, but they can still suffer from coronavirus.

That's why it's important for the community to know that the hit they take to their finances, family and community depends directly on the high transmission numbers and also on how long the spread of the virus will last. If we keep the distance, and the reason why we need to keep the distance, is because the virus requires a host to survive and if we keep the distance of more than six feet, then we lower the risk that the virus is transmitted from a person to someone else and that can lower the transmission and the duration of the transmission. So that's why the precautions that Dr. Page spoke of are very important to take us seriously.’

[00:41:47.080] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)
Of course. The more we do it now, the less we have to lose in the future. So, thank you very much Congressman for being with us. I would like to ask any of the experts with us if they would like to add something else, something else that you think is important.

[00:42:04.130] - Janet Murguía (UnidosUS)

Nicole, we know that coronavirus is dominating attention and rightly so. But there are things we can do to help our community that go beyond public health and help improve the lives of all of us. For example, tomorrow is Census Day. Please be sure to fill out your census form if you have not. And if you need help, call 1-800-CENSUS.

This is important because, as we have now reported, census data informs how resources reach communities and we all have to participate so that everyone benefits in our communities. This is very important. Also, another thing: there is still an ongoing election that is important for the well-being and future of all of us, especially the Latino community. It decides who is in the position to make decisions like the congressman, Dr. Ruiz. He’s on the committee that’s going to make a lot of decisions to improve our community. It is important that we participate in the elections and can get anyone more information about how to register to vote on our website dedicated to this topic and it is called AdelanteUnidos.org. All this is important, but more than anything I wanted to say thank you and give a big thank you again to our guests for their wisdom and for their time in this call and especially to Dr. Ruiz, Dr. Page, to Nicole and all of you on Telemundo for help us present all this information. Thank you so much.

[00:44:34.780] - Nicole Suarez (Telemundo NBC)

Thank you all very much. For us it is an honor and a priority to deliver this information. It is our commitment as part of Telemundo and we remind you that we have our campaign Hazte Contar, so we also ask you to participate in the census because it is very important and once again I want to thank Mrs. Janet Murguía (UnidosUS), Dr. Kathleen Page and Congressman Raúl Ruiz for their participation in this meeting for the Telemundo audience to join us in these conditions. Remember that you can find all the most up-to-date information about coronavirus in our information spaces every day and news at telemundo.com/salud. We hope this has cleared up these concerns that we all share, because you are not alone. We appreciate your participation and until next time, thank you so much.