

# Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) – Oxnard, CA

# SNAPSHOT

## Overview

Since 2001, the Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) has developed various interactive and participatory programs to help the large population of Mixtecs in Ventura County overcome everyday obstacles and build community pride.



## Mission

“To aid, organize and empower the indigenous community in Ventura County.” - MICOP website

## Constituency

- Latino (Mixteco, Zapoteco, Otomã, Purepecha) of all ages
- LGBTQ
- Homeless
- Immigrant
- Undocumented
- Formerly incarcerated

## Local Conditions & Critical Issues Impacting 0-5 Childhood Health in Oxnard, CA

**Community & Neighborhood Safety**—50% of Mixtecos report feeling unsafe while walking around in their neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

**Limited Transportation**—Only 40.9% of Mixtecos report that they are easily able to get to the places they need to go. Limited transportation access additionally leads to low food security and employment opportunities for families.<sup>1</sup>

“Another thing is that many women don’t drive. Transportation is crucial. Any type of project we want to initiate in our community whether they are classes, workshops, trainings they have to be in close proximity of the neighborhoods where our people live. We look in the community for a room, a school or somewhere along those lines because our people won’t drive. Public transportations is not very accessible in these areas.”

—Arcenio Lopez, Executive Director

**Employment Opportunities**—Only 26.2% of Mixteco families report being able to work enough of the year to support their family.<sup>1</sup>

### Education Opportunities

### Drugs & Substance Abuse

### Immigration Status

“Immigration status certainly has an impact [on childhood health]; it’s something we cannot discard. It’s something families live with the uncertainty and it has an impact in the sense that families live with fear...”

**Language Barriers**—Mixteco (and other indigenous cultures) in Ventura County face linguistic barriers, contributing to inadequate mental health treatment.<sup>2</sup>

## Key Indicators of Childhood Health in Oxnard, CA

# 57%

of Mixteco families in Ventura County have appropriate **access to healthcare**.<sup>1</sup>

# 35%

of 5th, 7th, and 9th graders in Ventura County are **overweight**.<sup>3</sup>

# 41%

of Mixteco families have enough **food** to eat throughout the year.<sup>1</sup>

## Current Wellness & Safety Efforts

**Cal-Fresh & Medi-Cal Enrollment Programs**—help enroll families in public benefits programs

**Community Outreach**—provide trainings/education about various health topics (e.g., depression, domestic violence, healthy communication, etc.)

**Labor Justice**—fighting for the rights of the farmworkers

**Tequio Youth**—youth group focusing on identity, leadership, and education access

**First 5 in Ventura County**

*“We have a team of 7 promotoras/case managers where [their priority] is to make sure the kids are prepared and are adjusting well to preschool and [parents] are signing up for trainings.”*

## MICOP's Accomplishments in Wellness & Safety

- **“No Me Llamas Oxaquita”**—indigenous anti-discrimination campaign

*“The goal [of the campaign] was basically to eradicate the use of the word “Oxaquita”...it is a discriminatory term and terms alike that minimize you like a human like a Oxaquan. That was the objective, that in Ventura County school districts they made the effort to find the solution in their districts to stop the use of these words in their classrooms. Many did not know so another objective was to increase awareness that this is not a good term to use and to eradicate from their language. So there was a positive and supportive response from many school districts here and right now we are considering launching this in other counties of California such as Santa Barbara and continue the dialogue because there still continues...there is a community in Santa Maria where bullying is a huge issue among out children in schools.”*

- **DMV Language Access**

*“Here in California they approved in 2015 to give driver's license to everyone irrelevant of immigration status. This new bill went into effect in 2016, but they did not have exams available in Mixteco so although this law was advanced promising that once Mixteco community members presented their exams they could get a driver's license. So we began an initiative like a campaign to the DMV to add the written or oral exam in Mixteco or have Mixteco translators. So they understood and they approved it and now if a mom or a dad Mixteco needs their exam in Mixteco they just need to indicate they will need it in Mixteco and they will be assigned a translator.”*



## Community Defined “Best Practices” to Improve Childhood Health

### 1. Community Interest

*“I think the best thing we have had as an organization and practices to lead such campaigns are first it has to be in the community's interest, very rarely do we, even if there is an issue that bothers us a lot but if the community says no, it's something I am not interest then we won't go for it. What was “No me Llamas Oxaquita” and language access for Mixteco was because the community said we need to do this.”*

### 2. Organizers from the Community

*“An external person cannot organize the community because they don't have the knowledge of the community they are trying to organize. What we are organizing is making sure that whoever is organizing is from the community... Because an expert can come in who doesn't understand the culture and becomes involved and says something...and as soon as they say something that goes against the cultural values all the work for the campaign is lost and everything they have built so far.”*

## Community Defined “Best Practices” to Improve Childhood Health, cont’d.

### 3. Allies

“Who is around you? Who do you know? Who will help you out? The “No me Llamas Oaxaquita” campaign was moved [forward] because a member from one of the school districts, a board of trustees, was backing up our initiative and was pushing it and was showing us the steps to navigate the politics.”

### 4. Communication

“It is hard to have media communications representatives on your side but it is important to have one or two that can publicize your issue and the work you are doing around the issue, to elevate the consciousness of this issue to the world. In the campaigns, media communications were key.”

### Allies/Partnerships Working on Children’s Health

- City Impact–Oxnard, CA <http://www.cityimpact.com/>
- Kellogg Foundation–East Battle Creek, MI <https://www.wkkf.org/>
- University of California, Santa Barbara–Santa Barbara, CA <https://www.ucsb.edu/>



**Website:** <http://mixteco.org/>

**Address:** 520 W. 5th St. (Suite F)

**Telephone:** 805-483-1166

**Email:** [micop@mixteco.org](mailto:micop@mixteco.org)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/MICOP805/>

**Twitter:** @micop805

**YouTube:** [Proyecto Mixteco Indigena](http://Proyecto Mixteco Indigena)



1. Maxwell, A. E., Young, S., Crespi, C. M., Vega, R. R., Cayetano, R. T., & Bastani, R. (2015). Social determinants of health in the Mixtec and Zapotec community in Ventura County, California. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 14(16). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-015-0148-0>
2. Crandall, E., Woods, C., M.D., & Thurber, D., M.D. (2016, December). *Mental Health Services Act Innovations Mixteco Project: Healing the Soul*. Ventura, CA: Ventura County Behavioral Health.
3. Obesity in children. (2018). Retrieved February 16, 2018, from Healthy Ventura County website: <http://healthyventuracounty.org/healthy-kids/obesity-in-children/>