



Building knowledge. Taking action. Empowering communities.
For the health of people everywhere.

Spring 2026 > ISSUE 6

VOICES OF PUBLIC HEALTH

A message from our community



 **Dr. Kristynn Sullivan**
Director, Merced County Department of Public Health
PhD Alumna, UC Merced, Class of 2015

A message from our community

Merced County Public Health Director Dr. Kristynn Sullivan emphasizes that public health depends on shared responsibility. She calls for rebuilding trust in health information through consistent, transparent community partnership, expanding practical access, and making prevention easier than crisis response. She especially invites all to take small, meaningful actions.

“Our job is not just to provide facts, but to show up consistently, transparently, and in partnership with the communities we serve.”

— Dr. Kristynn Sullivan, Director, Merced County Department of Public Health

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Research and action



Participatory Project Illustrates Housing Justice Issues

Professor Irene Yen engaged local partners in discussing housing justice issues affecting their communities, including underlying causes and potential solutions. Lessons learned from the project were captured in a graphic booklet that reflects the participatory nature of the project.

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Student leaders



Students Champion Peer Health Education

Dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of fellow students and the broader community, Peer Health Educators Mikaela Mendoza and Yessenia Martinez work to provide education and resources to improve student health and well-being.

[More >](#)

Featured alumni



Public Health Alumna Interests Rooted in Health Equity

UC Merced alumna Valerie Martinez turns her San Joaquin Valley roots into equity-focused public health research, examining how environmental exposures and neighborhood conditions shape pregnancy outcomes and healthier futures for California communities.

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Faculty on the forefront



Understanding How Immigration Policy Affects Health

An Interview with associate professor Maria-Elena Young discusses how immigration policy affects health.

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Follow the link below for more stories about UC Merced Public Health Department faculty research.

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