

February 26, 2021

VIA EMAIL [NPERALES@MALDEF.ORG](mailto:NPERALES@MALDEF.ORG)

Nina Perales  
Vice President of Litigation  
MALDEF  
110 Broadway, Suite 300  
San Antonio, TX 78205

*Re: Your February 23, 2021 Letter concerning UT Health RGV COVID-19 vaccinations*

Dear Ms. Perales:

Thank you for the referenced letter regarding an incident that occurred on February 20, 2021 at our UT Health RGV COVID-19 vaccination clinic in Edinburg, Texas. As a State of Texas institution of higher education, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is committed to providing the people of Rio Grande Valley – a region that historically has been burdened with health disparities – with the highest quality of accessible health care.

What happened on February 20, 2021 did not meet the high standards we set for ourselves, and does not reflect the institutional culture and values of UTRGV and UT Health RGV. Upon learning of the February 20 incident an internal review immediately was conducted, which identified instances of improper denial of vaccinations to eligible patients. These instances resulted from incorrect instructions having been provided to UT Health RGV staff, based on an understanding of guidance from state-level advisers that only Texas residents were eligible for vaccinations. We are deeply sorry for failing to uphold our standard of excellence, and we know that our community expects better of us.

We have already taken the following steps to correct this issue by:

- Issuing an apology to all we inadvertently affected.
- Identifying all patients known to be affected and promptly rescheduling them or contacting them for rescheduling.
- Expanding our ongoing public COVID-19 vaccine campaign in both English and Spanish to serve our bilingual community more equitably. Core to this messaging is our commitment to offer the vaccine to all individuals eligible under the State of Texas priority categories without regard to residency or immigration status.

**Office of Legal Affairs**

- Issuing the attached Public Notice in English and Spanish and ensuring that it is posted at all our vaccine sites. The notice also has been shared on our social media platforms and will air as a Public Service Announcement on Spanish-language radio.
- Ensuring that all information regarding our vaccination operations is available in Spanish. We have already updated and translated our [vaccination FAQs](#) to reflect our commitment.
- Retraining our UT Health RGV vaccine staff and actively conducting oversight to ensure that we do not repeat these errors.
- Responding to community partners like La Union Del Pueblo Entero (LUPE), LatinoJustice PRLDEF, and MALDEF in a manner that restores our community's faith in UT Health RGV.

We hope these steps address the concerns you have identified.

UTRGV is a proud Hispanic Serving Institution dedicated to promoting a healthy, equitable, and resilient Rio Grande Valley. In keeping with our mission, UTRGV's commitment is to offer vaccinations through UT Health RGV to all individuals eligible under the State of Texas priority categories without regard to residency or immigration status.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic one year ago, UTRGV has administered over 100,000 diagnostic tests and given almost 30,000 vaccinations to optimize the health and safety of the Rio Grande Valley. Our commitment to serving our community will continue. We look forward to working with all our partners across the Rio Grande Valley toward advancing this important goal.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,



Karen E. Adams, J.D.

cc: John Zerwas, M.D., Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs, The University of Texas System  
Guy Bailey, Ph.D., President, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley  
John H. Krouse, M.D., Ph.D., MBA, UTRGV Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, Dean,  
School of Medicine  
Joe A. Galvan, J.D., MBA, Deputy Chief Legal Officer – Healthcare, UTRGV Office of Legal Affairs

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UT Health  
Rio Grande Valley

## Public Notice

UT Health RGV's mission is to improve the quality of health and wellness for individuals and families in the Rio Grande Valley and, most recently, to do its part to eradicate COVID-19 by providing testing, contact tracing, and vaccinations.

Our commitment to you is that COVID-19 vaccine distribution will be made available to all eligible individuals, and no eligible individual will be denied a vaccine by UT Health RGV based on the individual's residency or immigration status.

If anyone was previously denied the vaccine by UT Health RGV because of residency or immigration status, please email [covidvaccine@utrgv.edu](mailto:covidvaccine@utrgv.edu) so we can reschedule you at your earliest convenience.

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# Aviso público

La vocación de UT Health RGV es mejorar la calidad de la salud y el bienestar de las personas y familias de El Valle del Río Grande, además de, más recientemente, cumplir con su parte en la erradicación del COVID-19 mediante pruebas, rastreo de contactos y vacunas.

Nuestro compromiso con ustedes es no solo que la distribución de la vacuna contra el COVID 19 esté a disposición de todas las personas aptas, sino también que UT Health RGV no niegue a ninguna persona apta la vacuna con base en su situación migratoria o de residencia.

En caso de que UT Health RGV le haya negado la vacuna a causa de su situación migratoria o de residencia, favor de escribir a **[covidvaccine@utrgv.edu](mailto:covidvaccine@utrgv.edu)** para que podamos reprogramar su cita lo antes posible.