



PR

HPV

SUCCESS  
STORY



# CASE STUDY

**Puerto Rico HPV Success Story**  
**Project: Multisector coalition to accelerate HPV cancer prevention through immunization**  
**Timeline: 2014-2019**  
**Stage in Project: Complete. Next phase: HPV cancer elimination**



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This story is about how Puerto Rico built a strong and diverse multisector coalition that dramatically altered the course of HPV cancer prevention – driving vaccination rates to >90% and securing a state commitment to eliminate HPV-related cancers.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT:

All the enabling factors seemed to be in place for accelerated HPV vaccination uptake:

- Both private and public sector adolescents had free insurance coverage for HPV vaccines
- Manufacturers invested heavily in healthcare professional and patient education
- Physical access to immunization was readily available
- There were no vaccine supply issues
- Puerto Rico had a strong child vaccination culture

**Then why were HPV vaccination rates slow to grow and the Puerto Rico state immunization program shying away from making a strong recommendation for HPV vaccination?**

## SOLUTION:

The missing force necessary to drive changes in behavior was a strong and diverse multisector coalition to facilitate effective collaboration towards a unifying goal: HPV cancer prevention through immunization.

The Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, affiliated to the University of Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Puerto Rico Chapter of the American Cancer Society and VOCES Immunization Coalition together built a strong and diverse multisector coalition of 80+ organizations to design and execute a centralized strategy to change public policy and include HPV vaccination as a requirement in the school-entry immunization schedule.

**Researchers, physicians and public health organizations** contributed local evidence on HPV disease burden, access challenges and clinical and financial outcomes of elevated vaccination rates.

**Advocacy organizations** reframed advocacy from HPV vaccination to cancer prevention and translated scientific information into messages relevant to key audiences – parents, faith-based organizations and government officials.

**Physician organizations** provided objective, scientific information and a united front to counter antivax claims.

**Communication experts** educated journalists and influenced media coverage on HPV and cancer prevention.

**Community organizations** developed spokespersons and created a cancer prevention movement by turning their members into advocates for the cause and fueling public discussion.



## ACHIEVEMENTS

The multisector immunization coalition achieved four strategic milestones in its journey towards cancer prevention through immunization, finally establishing public policy for HPV cancer elimination.

**1. VOCES HPV Advisory Panel Report (2014)** – Local experts from sectors of the health ecosystem came together to consolidate local data on HPV cancers and immunization and developed a strategic blueprint to reach the Healthy People 2020 target of 80% HPV vaccination rate for adolescents.

**2. All Against Cancer Campaign (2017)** – 80+ organizations joined to manifest that HPV immunization is about cancer prevention and to

support the inclusion of HPV vaccines in the school-entry immunization schedule.

**3. HPV inclusion in school-entry immunization schedule (2018)** – The Secretary of Health included HPV vaccines in the school-entry immunization schedule, first as a recommended vaccine and later as a required vaccine for all adolescents 11-12 y/o. The age range has since been expanded to 11-16.

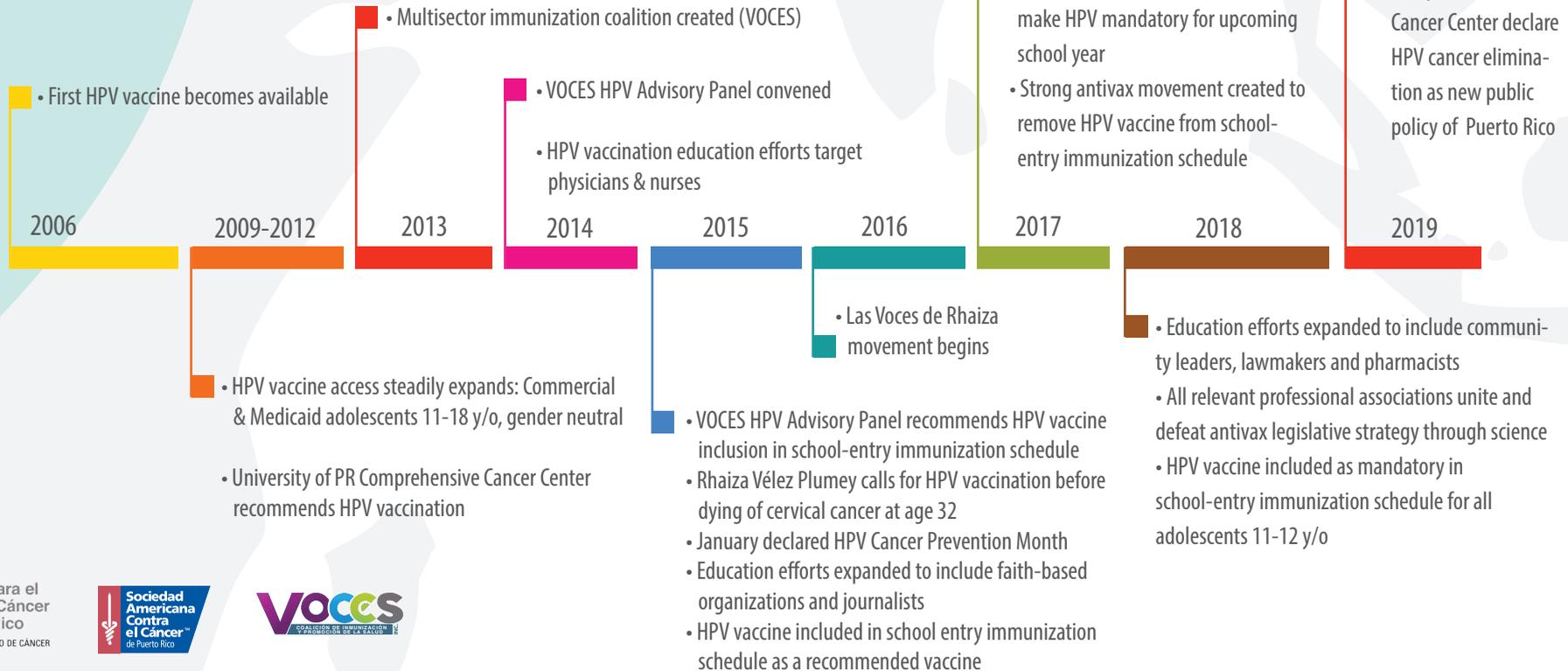
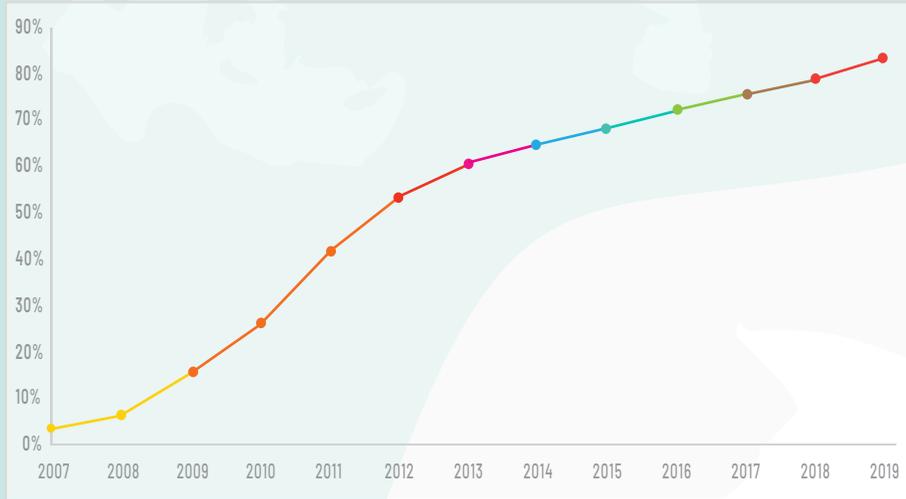
**4. Puerto Rico HPV Cancer Free Summit (2019)** – The Department of Health and the University of Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Center issued a joint statement declaring HPV cancer elimination as the new public policy of Puerto Rico, and called on the multisector immunization coalition to define the next steps to make it a reality.

## CONCLUSION:

The Puerto Rico multisector immunization coalition, strong and diverse, is virtually unstoppable and will eliminate HPV cancer. It leverages comprehensive and deep expertise of members in strategy development. It integrates traditionally antagonistic groups by giving them a voice in planning and execution. It reacts effectively to counter antivax noise. It generates broad societal support, turning it into a movement that drives the policy agenda.

# HPV vaccine school entry requirement as engine for HPV cancer elimination

*A diverse multisector coalition made it possible*



PR HPV VACCINATION RATE:

**90.6%**



MALES AND FEMALES 11-12 Y/O WITH AT LEAST 1 DOSE. PUERTO RICO IMMUNIZATION REGISTRY 2019

**80+**

ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT HPV VACCINATION AS CANCER PREVENTION

**TOP 5**

PR HOLDS TOP 5 SPOT IN US JURISDICTIONS FOR HPV VACCINATION RATE

**7%**

7% OF NEW CANCERS IN WOMEN AND 5% OF NEW CANCERS IN MEN ARE RELATED TO HPV

 **PR** DECLARES

**HPV CANCER ELIMINATION POLICY**

## THE AMAZING TEAM BEHIND THE SUCCESS



PROGRAMA DE CONTROL COMPRENSIVO DE CÁNCER

Our mission is to reduce the incidence, mortality and economic impact of cancer through the implementation of the Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan.



We are a community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem in Puerto Rico.



We are a multisector coalition, centered on communities, dedicated to health promotion and disease prevention through immunization and evidence-based strategies.



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