

HARD CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE:

5 Resources for Addressing Hesitancy

While COVID-19 vaccines continue to be distributed throughout the country, many are still unsure if they will get the vaccine. Key in the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine is equitable access and distribution to ensure that vulnerable populations and communities that have been historically left behind are protected against the virus. Equally as important are leadership efforts by elected officials, public health officials, and their partners to ensure that public health messaging regarding the safety and the efficacy of vaccines reaches vaccine hesitant people.

Many Black, Indigenous, Latino/Hispanic and other people of color are hesitant to receive the vaccine due to historical and present accounts of racism in medicine and beyond. Vaccine distribution plans must address vaccine hesitancy concerns to reach herd immunity, protect vulnerable people, and contribute to the return to a sense of normalcy. This 5-step resource is designed to support the hard conversations about the vaccine with vaccine hesitant individuals.

1 Create Spaces to Discuss Vaccine Information and Discuss Hesitations

To begin hard conversations about the vaccine, the first step is creating a safe and welcoming space for vaccine hesitations to be voiced and heard.

- ◆ Be intentional in creating space for communication:
 - ◆ Provide a variety of communication channels to discuss hesitation about the vaccine including social media messaging, phone outreach, mailings, townhall meetings, etc.
- ◆ Partner with trusted community organizations and leaders to create space
 - ◆ Non-profit community- based organizations
 - ◆ Religious leaders and churches, mosques, synagogues
- ◆ Prepare for conversation by considering the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of the individual(s), including the language spoken. Consider creating materials in various languages

2 Acknowledge Past Harm and Hesitation Concerns

Many people, especially Black, Indigenous, and Latino/Hispanic individuals have deep-rooted mistrust in government and medical officials due to historical accounts of medical racism. It is important to acknowledge this past harm to begin repair and rebuild trust.

- ◆ Begin the conversation by listening with empathy
- ◆ Acknowledge reasons of mistrust in government and medical officials
 - ◆ Many Black people carry trauma and mistrust due to past examples of racist medical practices and studies, such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study
 - ◆ Many Black, Indigenous, Latino/Hispanic and other people of color have felt abandoned in the COVID-19 response
 - ◆ Individuals carry a vast set of personal experiences that may have led to vaccine hesitancy

3 Counter Any Misinformation

While allowing space for the person to voice hesitation is important, clarifying misinformation during the conversation is also key to building trust in the vaccine.

- ◆ Prepare for responses to vaccine misinformation
- ◆ Correct and clarify any misinformation
- ◆ Ask what information is important to them in their decision to receive the vaccine
- ◆ Adapt message depending on input

4 Reiterate the Science

Be prepared to clarify and reaffirm the science behind the vaccine and have trustworthy resources on hand.

- ◆ Direct the individual to trustworthy [information rooted in science from the CDC](#) and local public health officials
- ◆ Discuss the benefits of the vaccine and possible side effects
- ◆ Acknowledge that science and information are rapidly changing, but reaffirm trustworthy information
- ◆ Stress the number of lives saved by immunization

5 Continue the Conversation

Recognize that one conversation may not be the deciding factor in the person changing their mind about receiving the vaccine. Be patient and follow up with the individual.

- ◆ Refer to trusted source such as a local public health agency, community center, or provider
- ◆ Set up another time for conversation, if comfortable



Resources

[The Black Community and the COVID-19 Vaccine: Discussing the Justified Questions - National Academy of Medicine](#)

[COVID-19 and the Legacy of Racism: Vaccine Hesitancy and Treatment Bias - NIHCM Foundation](#)

[Building Trust in COVID-19 Vaccines and Beyond Through Authentic Community Investment - American Journal of Public Health](#)

[Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Conversations with Patients - CDC](#)

[COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy: 10 tips for talking with patients - AMA](#)

[Physician tips on how to talk to patients about vaccines - AMA](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Education: A guide for conversations with nursing home team members - Institute for Healthcare Improvement \(IHI\)](#)

[What to Say to People Hesitant About the Coronavirus Vaccine - NPR COVID-19 Vaccine Script - AMA](#)