



Resources for Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Communication

About this toolkit

This toolkit was created to support the COVID-19 vaccine partnership between YMCA of the USA and National League of Cities. Messages and tips are current as of September 2021; where possible, we include links to frequently updated resources for ongoing use.

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About NLC

The National League of Cities is the voice of America's cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people. NLC works to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy and drive innovative solutions.

About YMCA of the USA

The Y is the leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community by empowering young people, improving the health and well-being of people of all ages, and inspiring action in and across communities.





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CHECKLIST:

Priority actions to boost vaccination in your city

Links take you to additional information and resources in the toolkit.

STEP ONE

Identify and understand your audience.

This toolkit focuses on engaging people who have been unable or have been hesitant to become fully vaccinated.

- **Identify.** Reach out to your **public health department** to find out who still needs the vaccine in your community.
- **Explore.** Work with trusted community leaders to understand what's keeping people from getting vaccinated, what information they need, how best to reach them, and how you can help.
- **Prioritize racial equity.** As part of identifying who you need to reach, work to understand the historical and current conditions in your community and how they shape access to vaccination.
- **Look inside.** Don't forget your own employees! **Health Action Alliance** provides resources for employers to reach their employees.
- **Listen.** People's reluctance may be based on fear, misinformation, trouble getting to an appointment or other factors. Listen—in the coffee shop and grocery store, in town meetings, in news and social media—to understand.

CHECKLIST:

Priority actions to boost vaccination in your city

Links take you to additional information and resources in the toolkit.

STEP TWO

Gather the information and messages you need.

- **Use messages that work.** On Page 7, you'll find key messages that address the information people most need to know.
- **Add specific facts your audience needs and be ready for questions.** Address your community's specific concerns to make your messages even stronger. The toolkit includes talking points to help.
- **Be positive and encouraging.** Emotions like pride, hope and parental love are more likely to move people to act. Avoid fear or shame, which can immobilize people or make them resistant.
- **Adapt as information and guidelines change quickly.** The **CDC** and the **Ad Council** are good sources for updates and emerging message guidance, as details about the pandemic continue to evolve.
- **Spot and counter false messages and misinformation.** Listen for false ideas gaining traction, and work with your trusted messengers to debunk them quickly. Be persistent and patient as you continue talking about vaccine safety and effectiveness.

CHECKLIST:

Priority actions to boost vaccination in your city

Links take you to additional information and resources in the toolkit.

STEP THREE

Reach people where they are, in many ways.

- **Collaborate and align.** Engage your existing partners, including other city leaders, community-based organizations, like the local Y, the business community, schools and universities, and others to make a plan for working together. Look for ways to align and leverage your collective resources so you're creating a full program that supports people from every angle—from outreach to transportation to vaccination sites.
- **Engage trusted messengers.** In many cases, who shares information is as important as what they say. **Doctors and health care professionals** can be among the most trusted sources. With your partners, engage others who are trusted and influential in the communities you've prioritized. Provide the information and support they need to reach people in meaningful ways.
- **Share stories.** Encourage community members, leaders and influencers to share their story—why they decided to get vaccinated, what it was like, and why they're glad they did it. They can do this in their day-to-day conversations, and they can also become spokespeople in your other efforts.
- **Use many approaches.** Reach people in different ways as they go through their daily lives. Share information and stories in local news features and opinion pieces, presentations to the community, posts on your social media and more. Look for creative ways to share information the way your communities say they want it—from worksite visits to barbershop talks to after worship events.
- **Consider incentives.** Many cities, organizations and employers are using actual **incentives to motivate people to get vaccinated.**

Key messages to boost vaccination in your city

Links take you to additional information and resources in the toolkit.

Key Messages About the COVID-19 Vaccines:

- 1. Vaccination is our best path to ending the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- 2. COVID-19 vaccines are free, safe and they work.** The vaccines prevent COVID-19 disease, especially severe illness and death.
- 3. Vaccines not only keep individuals healthy, they help keep communities healthy.**
- 4. Free vaccines** are offered at health clinics, pharmacies and other places in the community. *(Insert information about how to find vaccines in your community.)*
- 5. Vaccinations are required by many employers and in some public spaces.** *This creates the safest possible environment for workers and customers. (Details on employer mandates and other mandates are evolving rapidly. Please visit **Public Health Communication Collaborative** and **Health Action Alliance** for details and updated messages.)*
- 6. You may have some side effects** after you get the vaccine—**these are normal** signs that your body is building protection, and they should go away after a few days.
- 7. It's OK to have questions about vaccination.** Talk to your doctor or visit **GetVaccineAnswers.org** to find the information you need.

*The messages above are pulled from resources developed and tested by credible organizations, such as **CDC**, **Health Action Alliance**, **Public Health Communications Collaborative** and **GetVaccineAnswers.org**. These messages cover the basic information people most need to know. Please note:*

- ♦ *The toolkit includes additional details for these messages, talking points to address specific concerns, and ready-to-use tools to reach specific groups of people.*
- ♦ *As the pandemic, vaccines, variants, boosters and other details continue to evolve, be sure to check **CDC** and the **Ad Council** for updated messages.*
- ♦ *You can also echo your state and local public health departments' messages.*



STEP ONE:

Identify and understand your audience.

This toolkit focuses on engaging people who have been unable or have been hesitant to become fully vaccinated. Here are some ways you can determine who still needs the vaccine in your community.

Identify

Reach out to your **public health department** to find out who still needs the vaccine in your community. Start with the vaccine coordinator within the health department and they will guide you to the information you need. Consider both who is not vaccinated in terms of raw numbers of people, and also, which communities are being vaccinated at a lower than average percentage.

Here's how to find your public health partners if you aren't already in touch:

- ◆ **CDC Public Health Department Directory for States, Territories, Counties, Tribes and Cities.**
- ◆ **NLC State-Specific COVID-19 Resource Pages For Local Leaders Developed and Updated by State Municipal Leagues.**

While you're talking with them, also ask what messages, materials and outreach strategies they're using and how you can best align with their effort.

Explore

As you begin to prioritize communities, work with trusted community leaders to check your data and assumptions. Ask for their thoughts about COVID-19 and vaccination, explore what's keeping people from getting vaccinated, understand what information and support they need, and ask how you can help.

Prioritize racial equity

As part of identifying who you need to reach, work to understand the historical and current conditions in your community and how they shape access to vaccination. Among many communities of color, **vaccine hesitancy** can be linked to a long history of abuse including medical experimentation without consent, forced sterilization and the weaponization of disease. Misinformation and disinformation about vaccines, rapidly evolving (and confusing) information and guidelines, and the lack of culturally relevant vaccine information further create distrust.

In addition, although the U.S. now has a steady supply of vaccines, that doesn't mean everyone has access. In many areas—especially some Black and Latino/a/x communities and rural areas—digital access and literacy, language barriers, or logistical challenges, like a lack of transportation or difficulty getting time off from work, continue to pose barriers.

Look inside

Don't forget your own employees! **Health Action Alliance** provides resources for employers to reach their employees, including a guide specifically for city and other public sector employers, created with NLC.

Listen

What you're hearing in the community can provide more clues about who you need to reach—including who might be feeling more open but still nervous, or who is still facing barriers you can help break down. People's reluctance may be based on fear, misinformation, trouble getting to an appointment, or other factors. Listen—in the coffee shop and grocery store, in town meetings, in news and social media—to understand.

- ◆ Acknowledge that it is common to have questions or concerns.
- ◆ Recognize that the choice to be vaccinated is a personal one.
- ◆ Listen for misinformation, fears, questions and concerns so you can find the right information to share.
- ◆ Empathize with those who are fearful; many are victims of intentionally spread misinformation.
- ◆ Consider these tips for **navigating sensitive conversations**.



STEP TWO:

Gather the information and messages you need.

Use messages that work

Below you'll find key messages informed by **CDC, Health Action Alliance, Public Health Communications Collaborative, GetVaccineAnswers.org** and other trusted sources. They cover the main information people most need to know.

Vaccination is our best path to ending the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 vaccines are free, safe and they work. The vaccines prevent COVID-19 disease, especially severe illness and death.

- ◆ With the FDA granting full approval for a COVID-19 vaccine, Americans can be even more confident that the COVID-19 vaccines work and are safe. FDA's full approval means that a vaccine has cleared every level of review.
- ◆ COVID-19 vaccines are effective against severe disease and death from the virus that causes COVID-19, including the Delta variant.
- ◆ Millions of people in the U.S., **including 96% of medical doctors**, are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
 - ◆ For current vaccination data by state and county, use the **COVID Collaborative Vaccine Tracker**.

- ◆ The COVID-19 vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.
- ◆ For up-to-date messaging about how the virus affects vaccinated people and whether they can spread it, please visit **Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines**.

Vaccines not only keep individuals healthy, they also help keep communities healthy.

- ◆ Infectious diseases can travel quickly through a community and make a lot of people sick. However, when enough people are vaccinated against an infectious disease, the germs can't travel as easily from person to person. The entire community is less likely to get the disease.

Free vaccines are offered at health clinics, pharmacies and other places in the community.

- ◆ To find a location near you:
 - ◇ Visit **vaccines.gov**.
 - ◇ Call **1-800-232-0233** (available in 150+ languages).
 - ◇ Text your zip code to **438829** (English) and **822862** (Spanish) to find vaccine providers near you, and coordinate a free ride to a provider.
 - ◇ *Include localized information about how to find vaccines in your community.*
- ◆ As of July 2021 the vaccines are available to anyone age 12 and up.
 - ◇ For up-to-date information about childhood vaccination, please visit **Information about COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens** and **American Academy of Pediatrics' FAQ for parents**.
- ◆ Vaccines are free and available regardless of a person's immigration status.
 - ◇ Proof of immigration status is not required at vaccination sites.
 - ◇ For updates on CDC guidance for immigrants and refugees, please visit: **COVID-19: Resources for Refugee Resettlement Service Providers**.

Vaccinations are required by many employers and in some public spaces. This creates the safest possible environment for workers and customers.

- ◆ Details on employer mandates and other mandates are evolving rapidly. Please visit **Public Health Communication Collaborative** and **Health Action Alliance** for details and updated messages.

You may have some side effects after you get the vaccine. These are normal signs that your body is building protection, and they should go away after a few days.

- ◆ Your arm may be sore or swollen. You may also feel tired, have a headache, fever or chills.
- ◆ Side effects do not mean you have COVID-19—in fact, **it's not possible to get COVID-19 from vaccines**.

It's OK to have questions about vaccination. Talk to your doctor or visit **GetVaccineAnswers.org** to find the information you need.

Add specific facts your audience needs and be ready for questions

Every community is different, so augment the main messages with facts to address specific worries you're hearing. These regularly updated FAQ resources can help:

- ◆ **CDC: COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions.**
- ◆ COVID Collaborative and Ad Council: **Questions & Answers About COVID-19 Vaccines.**
- ◆ The Public Health Communications Collaborative offers resources for **communicating about COVID-19 vaccines** and **answers to tough questions.**

Here are some talking points to address some of the most frequent concerns. (Be sure to check the FAQ links above for the latest updates.)

Safety of vaccines

- ◆ With the FDA granting full approval for a COVID-19 vaccine, Americans can be even more confident that the COVID-19 vaccines work and are safe. FDA's full approval means that a vaccine has cleared every level of review.
- ◆ All COVID-19 vaccines have been thoroughly tested. Millions of people across the U.S. and around the world—from all backgrounds—have gotten them.
- ◆ The COVID-19 vaccines were able to be developed quickly because bureaucratic processes were streamlined—NOT because corners were cut or safety ignored. Decades of research on other coronaviruses made it possible for scientists to quickly develop the COVID-19 vaccines.
- ◆ None of the vaccines contain the virus that causes COVID-19 in any form. They cannot give you COVID-19.
- ◆ These vaccines use genetic material that teaches your body how to fight the virus. But the genetic material does not change your genes.
- ◆ Source: **CDC COVID-19.**

Side effects

- ◆ Common side effects after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine include pain, redness and/or swelling at the sight of the injection (on your arm). Some people might experience headache, fever, tiredness, muscle pain, chills or nausea. These side effects should go away after a few days and can be reduced by drinking water and massaging or icing the arm.
- ◆ Side effects after the second shot can be felt more than after the first, but this means the body is building immune protection, and the side effects should still go away in a few days.
- ◆ Serious long-term side effects from any type of vaccine usually show up in the first six weeks. The FDA required all COVID-19 vaccines to be monitored for at least eight weeks during the trials. Millions of people have received the vaccine, and no long-term side effects have been found.
- ◆ Source: **CDC COVID-19.**

Logistics, such as lack of access to online scheduling or time off from work

- ◆ Vaccines are free and available to all people 12 years and older (as of September 2021) living in the U.S.
- ◆ To find a vaccine provider near you, visit **vaccines.gov**; text your ZIP Code to 438829 (GETVAX); or call 1-800-232-0233 (TTY: 888-720-7489) for assistance in English, Spanish and many other languages.
- ◆ **Lyft** is offering free rides to vaccine sites.
- ◆ Sources: **DHS Statement on Equal Access to COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccine Distribution Sites.**

Documentation or immigration status

- ◆ Vaccines are free and available to all people 12 years and older living in the U.S., regardless of immigration or insurance status.
- ◆ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) put out **a statement** that said, “U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection **will not conduct enforcement operations at or near vaccine distribution sites or clinics.**” This means that vaccination sites do not have immigration enforcement and you will *not* be deported if you get the vaccine.
- ◆ Sources: **DHS Statement on Equal Access to COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccine Distribution Sites** and **Boundless: Can All Immigrants Get the COVID-19 Vaccine?**

Myths of microchips in the vaccine

- ◆ The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any kind of microchips used to track you. No microchip is small enough to fit through the needle of a syringe.
- ◆ Source: **LA County Public Health.**

Vaccines and fertility

- ◆ There is currently no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in women or men.
- ◆ Source: CDC: **COVID-19 Vaccines for People Who Would Like to Have a Baby.**

Vaccines during pregnancy or while breastfeeding

- ◆ CDC encourages all pregnant people or people who are thinking about becoming pregnant, and those breastfeeding, to get vaccinated to protect themselves from COVID-19.
- ◆ COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy builds antibodies against the virus, similar to non-pregnant people. Also, COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy might help protect babies against COVID-19.
- ◆ Pregnant and recently pregnant people are more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant people. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can protect you from severe illness from COVID-19.
- ◆ Evidence about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy, although limited, has been growing. These data suggest that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy.
- ◆ Source: **CDC: COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding.**

Vaccination for children

- ◆ The science here is changing rapidly; we recommend you consult the following resources:
 - ◇ **American Academy of Pediatrics' FAQ for parents.**
 - ◇ **CDC information about COVID-19 vaccines for children and teens.**

Belief that getting vaccinated—or not—doesn't affect others

- ◆ Older people and people living with chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes, are more likely to experience severe—even fatal—cases of COVID-19 if they catch it. The more people who receive the coronavirus vaccines, the sooner vulnerable people can feel safe being among others.
- ◆ Also, since every COVID-19 infection gives the coronavirus a chance to mutate—and potentially become more contagious and severe—being vaccinated helps prevent variants.
- ◆ Source: **CDC: Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine.**

Apathy or lack of urgency about COVID

- ◆ While the long-term impacts of COVID-19 are still unclear, it's clear that once you get it, your life can be severely disrupted for months or years.
- ◆ Even if you're relatively young and fit, you can't be sure that you won't get seriously ill or struggle with long-term COVID-related problems. Getting vaccinated will protect you and keep your community healthy.
- ◆ All viruses change over time and develop variants, such as the COVID-19 Delta variant. New strains can be more contagious, as they mutate to spread more efficiently. This is why it is so important that more people get vaccinated quickly, so we can stop new variants from forming.
 - ◇ The good news is that the current vaccines recognize variants and provide strong immunity against them.
 - ◇ Although there have been some "breakthrough cases" (when a vaccinated person gets COVID-19) reported, those have been very rare. As of July 22, 2021, 97% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 were unvaccinated.
- ◆ Source: **CDC: Delta Variant: What We Know About the Science.**

Belief that having had COVID provides needed antibodies

- ◆ If you've been infected with COVID-19, you have some antibodies that may protect you—but that immunity has limits. The biggest limit is that it doesn't last for very long. Fully vaccinated people, on the other hand, still have good immunity to COVID-19 after a year—and probably longer.
- ◆ The current vaccines recognize COVID-19 variants (like the Delta variant) and provide strong immunity against them. For people who were previously infected with COVID-19, you don't really know your level of immunity against a specific variant or how degraded your immune response may be. You might actually be susceptible to reinfection with one of these variants.
- ◆ Source: **CDC: Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination.**

Concern (or lack of trust) when guidance has been unclear and is constantly changing

- ◆ It is frustrating that guidance continues to change.
- ◆ Public health officials and scientists are continuing to learn about how this virus spreads, how it affects different people, and how best to control it. As knowledge evolves and scientists discover new information about COVID-19, public health officials are committed to providing accurate and timely guidance.

Be positive and encouraging

It can be tempting to use emotions like fear or shame—but fear can immobilize people, and shame may make people tune out or become even more resistant. Positive emotions like pride, hope and parental love (including protecting anyone perceived as vulnerable) are more effective. (For more on the role of emotions in vaccine conversations, see the **Guide to COVID-19 Vaccine Communication**.)

Work with your communities to understand what motivates people to get vaccinated and work those into your outreach and communication. Is it the freedom to gather with older adults or immunocompromised loved ones without fear? To travel more safely? To ensure that schools are able to stay open for in-person learning?

Adapt as information and guidelines change quickly

As details about the pandemic continue to evolve, CDC and others are issuing frequent updates about variables such as variants, **boosters**, vaccination status, and guidance on masks and other behaviors. For updates and emerging message guidance, **CDC** and the **Ad Council** are good sources.

The rate of virus spread in your local community, in addition to your individual health and vaccination status, will largely determine the safest options for you. Your local health department is an important source of COVID-19 information that's specific to your community.

Spot and counter false messages and misinformation

Myths and misinformation are rampant, especially in social media and via word-of-mouth networks. Much of it is being intentionally planted. Listen for false ideas that are gaining traction in your communities, and work with your trusted messengers to debunk them quickly.

Some sources to help track and debunk misinformation:

- ◆ **John Hopkins Medicine: COVID-19 Vaccines: Myth Versus Fact.**
- ◆ **CDC: Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccination.**
- ◆ The Public Health Communications Collaborative offers resources for **responding to misinformation** (with guidance on what to respond to directly/proactively; what to respond to only if directly asked; and what to ignore and not give further fuel to).



STEP THREE:

Reach people where they are, in many ways.

Collaborate and Align

Engage your existing partners, including other city leaders, community-based organizations, like the local Y, the business community, schools and universities, and others to make a plan for working together.

Look for ways to align and leverage your collective resources so you're creating a full program that supports people from every angle. For example, the city might be able to provide transportation, the faith-based community might lead on outreach, your public health department can provide data, and hospital and community health centers can provide testing locations. When you meet, map out who can do what, then make a plan for each partner to focus on where their strengths and resources are.

Below are examples of partners to include in your local collaboration.

City leaders and teams:

City leaders, like mayors and council members, can lend their voices to build vaccine confidence and debunk misinformation. Municipal governments can host community meetings and listening sessions with experts and can reach partners in their communities. They can also offer city facilities to support vaccination and information sharing events.

NLC has compiled **resources and real-life examples** of local leaders creating change and impact in their communities. Other ways local elected officials are engaging with their communities:

- ◆ Hosting pop-up clinics in neighborhoods, at worksites, barbershops, beauty salons, places of worship and other frequented locations.
- ◆ Participating in the **Mayors Challenge to Increase COVID-19 Vaccines**.
- ◆ Engaging **employers and businesses** to ensure a healthy workforce.
- ◆ Offering free transportation to vaccine sites, so all community members can access the vaccine. (**Lyft** is offering free rides nationwide to vaccination sites.)
- ◆ Working with colleges and universities to mobilize students and faculty to get their vaccines.
- ◆ Canvassing neighborhoods to reach every household.
- ◆ Sharing messaging and information about COVID-19 and vaccines.

“Local elected officials are distinctly positioned to protect the health and safety of America’s residents and to provide reassurance in times of crisis.”

—National League of Cities

Here are some additional resources for city leaders and teams:

- ◆ **Vaccine Resources from National League of Cities.**
- ◆ **American Rescue Plan offers funding to support vaccine uptake.**
- ◆ **COVID-19 Local Response Principles.**

The Y:

As a trusted voice and partner in their community, local Ys understand community needs and barriers, are effective at convening stakeholders, and can address equity issues by reaching historically excluded groups within their community.

“Ys across the country are committed to providing vaccine education, and many have offered to serve as vaccine distribution sites.”

—The YMCA

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the Y has worked diligently to meet the most pressing needs of the 10,000 communities they serve across the U.S., especially those that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. This includes:

- ◆ Providing child care to essential workers and first responders.
- ◆ Feeding families facing food insecurity and connecting with seniors who are isolated.
- ◆ Housing people who are homeless.
- ◆ Supporting children learning virtually.

The Y of the USA offers **COVID-19 vaccine resources** for use by national and local organizations across all sectors.

Communities that are experiencing structural racism:

Responding to COVID-19 requires meaningful collaborations—and trust building—with communities that are experiencing structural and systemic racism, which has put their health at higher risk. Here are some practical steps to successfully engage with communities and partners, adapted from **Engaging With Communities—Lessons (Re)Learned From COVID-19**:

- ◆ Include leaders from affected communities in decision-making.
- ◆ Co-create solutions and communications with cross-sector partners (community-based organizations, clinicians, universities, medical centers, schools of public health, housing and transportation sectors, community development, etc.).
- ◆ Where possible, compensate these organizations and leaders for their time—through stipends, grants and other means, or at least through in-kind support and added capacity.
- ◆ Collaborate to develop and deliver messages that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and relevant. Don't just deliver information: Have community conversations that encompass knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behavior.
- ◆ Work together to break down barriers to vaccine access. (For example, provide vaccines in places where people gather, rather than making them come to you.)
- ◆ Gather, share and interpret new data and information with affected communities.
- ◆ Ensure equitable access to testing, protective equipment and vaccines.

Spotlight:

Equitable Vaccine Access Panel on Washington Post Live

On Friday, April 9, YMCA of the USA President and CEO Kevin Washington joined National League of Cities CEO Clarence E. Anthony for a Washington Post Live discussion focusing on the organizations' vaccine equity and education initiative focused on Black and Brown communities.

Watch a recording of their conversation.

Cross-sector partners:

There are many partners to engage. The first stop: your **state and local public health departments**. With support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state and local health departments offer COVID-19 vaccination, testing and tracking, and information on the latest science and vaccine information.

Here are other sectors to engage, with links to tools to support them (see **Appendix** for more):

- ◆ **Community health workers or promotoras de la salud** (likely through your county public health department)
- ◆ **Health care**
- ◆ **Business**
- ◆ **K-12 schools**
- ◆ **Colleges, universities and higher education**
- ◆ **Faith-based organizations**

Engage trusted messengers

The message is important, but the messenger matters even more. Authentic community engagement is only possible when respected and trusted community leaders and organizations play a leadership role. **Doctors and health care professionals** are among the most trusted sources, along with friends and family.

Depending on the community, faith leaders, local business owners/workers and others may be trusted messengers. Work with local partners to identify people who have the confidence of community members. (See the **Appendix** for insights on messengers within specific communities.) Then, equip them to share information with their community.

Spotlight:

The **Shots at the Shop** initiative is a collaboration to engage barbershops and beauty salons in communities all across the nation in the effort to ensure that their communities have immunity from COVID-19.

Share stories

Encourage people in your community to share their story—why they decided to get vaccinated, what it was like, and why they’re glad they did it. People who were hesitant to get a COVID-19 vaccine said their family, friends and personal doctors helped convince them to get vaccinated. This **personal story from a Pennsylvania farmer** has been one of the most effective communication tools in rural America.

Help your community members share stories through:

- ◆ Personal messages—such as letters to the editor, blog or newsletter posts, public statements.
- ◆ Interviews with local media contacts. Here’s an example from **KARE-TV** in Cottage Grove, Minn., of the kind of local stories that help.
- ◆ Joining presentations in the community—at the local Y, the library, houses of worship, community centers and other gathering places.
- ◆ The **Big Shot Heroes campaign**. The Instagram campaign provides a way to submit hero stories of people who are taking action to support vaccination, as well as ideas for how you can share local stories.

Use many approaches

Together with your community partners, explore where and how to reach your priority audiences throughout their daily lives. Some ideas:

- ◆ Distribute materials where people gather, from the grocery store to the community center to local events.
- ◆ Host information events or speakers in partnership with community gathering places (e.g., libraries, schools, civic organizations, places of worship). An event might feature a trusted doctor, a community member who has been vaccinated, and a business leader who supports vaccination.
- ◆ Work with the local news media to share facts and stories.
- ◆ Use direct mail to deliver information about vaccines and vaccination sites to constituents' homes.
- ◆ Post frequently on your social media, and share posts from other organizations and people in the community to show that vaccination is common and positive.
- ◆ Look for creative ways to share information the way your communities say they want it—from worksite visits to barbershop talks to after worship events.
- ◆ Ask businesses to share information with employees and customers.
- ◆ Find other ideas in the CDC Foundation's **toolkit on vaccines for community-based organizations**.

Consider incentives

Many cities, organizations and employers are using **incentives to motivate people to get vaccinated**. Work with your community partners to understand what kind of incentive will be most relevant and motivating to the communities you've prioritized. Here are some resources to guide your planning:

- ◆ **National Governors Association summary of incentives used in each state.**
- ◆ List of **nationally available incentives that you can include in your communication**—including free childcare and transportation for people getting vaccinated, and discounts at many retailers—compiled by Health Action Alliance.

APPENDIX:

Ready-to-use tools to reach various communities

We've compiled insights and ready-to-use tools, created by trusted communicators, to help you understand and reach specific groups of people. Here's a quick, jump-to list of what you'll find:

Broad reach campaigns and message tools

Tools to engage specific populations and communities:

- ◆ Rural communities
- ◆ Black and African American communities
- ◆ Latino/a/x and Hispanic communities
- ◆ Indigenous communities
- ◆ Immigrant, migrant, refugee and lower English-proficient communities
- ◆ Partisan audiences
- ◆ Families with children and youth in the household
- ◆ Communities experiencing houselessness
- ◆ People living with disabilities

Tools for use with specific sectors and partners:

- ◆ Health care providers and health systems
- ◆ Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- ◆ Businesses and employers
- ◆ Faith-based communities
- ◆ Educational institutions
- ◆ Youth as peer educators and leaders

Broad reach campaigns and message tools

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- ◆ COVID-19 Vaccine customizable social media templates.
- ◆ Toolkits for specific audiences.
- ◆ **Communication Resources for COVID-19 Vaccines** (search by keyword, or filter by audience or topic for free print-only materials).

Ad Council.

- ◆ **Community Ambassador Toolkit: Resources for Conversations with the Vaccine Curious in your Community.** This kit is full of resources, including the latest research, tested messaging and downloadable tools.
- ◆ COVID-19 Vaccine Education Initiative.

Public Health Communication Collaborative Community COVID-19 Resources.

We Can Do This, U.S. Dept of HHS COVID-19 Public Education Campaign.

Tools to engage specific populations and communities

Rural communities: According to the **Health Action Alliance**, vaccination rates in rural counties are significantly lower than those in urban areas. Rural residents can face access barriers, such as long drives to vaccination clinics and limited internet, to make vaccine appointments. Focus on the safety of the vaccine by reminding people how long scientists have been working on the technology (30 years), and engage trusted messengers: doctors and health care providers, business leaders, family members and friends.

- ◆ **National Rural Health Association COVID-19 General Resources.**
- ◆ **Ad Council Rural Resources Toolkit.**

Black and African American communities: According to the **Ad Council**, Black and African American communities are more likely to be vaccine hesitant due to mistreatment by and mistrust in the medical system. The Ad Council reports that personal doctors are one of the most trusted sources of COVID-19 vaccine information, and the American Lung Association says family members, friends and leaders in the faith community can also be influential.

- ◆ The Ad Council's COVID-19 Vaccine Education Initiative: **GetVaccineAnswers.org**.
 - ◆ **Black Community COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit** and **COVID-19 FAQs for Black Communities.**
 - ◆ **The Black Faith Community on COVID-19 Vaccines [Video], Virtual Event Tips for Black Faith Communities** and **Sermon/Bible Study Guide for Black Faith Communities.**
- ◆ Black Coalition Against COVID and Kaiser Family Foundation campaign tools: **Greater Than COVID-THE CONVERSATION: Between Us, About Us.**
- ◆ NAACP: **COVID Know More campaign to fight misinformation.**
- ◆ Morehouse School of Medicine PSA: **For Me, For You, For Us [Video].**

Latino/a/x and Hispanic communities: The Ad Council found that Hispanic people often do not feel confident in the information they have received about the vaccine. It's important to emphasize that the vaccines are safe and the benefits of getting vaccinated outweigh the risks. Trusted messengers include people in one's inner circle, including neighbors, friends and personal doctors.

- ◆ CDC: **Vacunas contra el COVID-19.**
- ◆ FDA: **Enfermedad de COVID-19:** Incluye preguntas frecuentes sobre el COVID-19 y las vacunas.
- ◆ **Greater than COVID** (The Conversation/La Conversación), created by KFF with the Black Coalition Against COVID and UnidosUS.
- ◆ Salud America: **Juntos, We Can Stop COVID-19!**
- ◆ The Ad Council's COVID-19 Vaccine Education Initiative.
 - ◇ **Hispanic Community COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit** and **Herramientas para comunidades hispanas (Español).**
 - ◇ **The Hispanic Faith Community on COVID-19 Vaccines [Video].**
 - ◇ **Host a Virtual COVID-19 Vaccine Education Event for Your Church (English)** and **Organice un Evento Virtual de Educación Sobre la Vacuna Contra el COVID-19 Para su Iglesia (Español).**

Indigenous communities: According to **Indian Health Services**, Native people are four times more likely to be hospitalized—than non-Hispanic White persons—as a result of COVID-19. Encouraging community members to share personal vaccine stories is especially important. Community leaders and doctors are reliable and trusted messengers.

- ◆ The Urban Indian Health Institute's **COVID-19 Vaccination Messaging Guide.**
- ◆ **Indian Health Services COVID-19 Information Website.**
- ◆ **Urban Indian Health Institute COVID-19 Vaccine Resource Page** and **COVID-19 Vaccination Messaging Guide.**

Immigrant, migrant, refugee and lower English-proficient communities: COVID-19 vaccine information must be linguistically accessible—many resources exist in multiple languages and with images or icons to help illustrate the information. According to the NRC-IRM, personal or familial experience with medical experimentation and/or unethical medical practices may be a major barrier, so compassion and empathy are crucial in outreach. Community leaders, faith leaders and friends can be trusted messengers.

- ◆ CDC **Communication Toolkit** for limited-English proficient populations.
- ◆ FDA **Multilingual COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheets and Additional Resources**, with materials in over 30 languages.
- ◆ National Resource Center for Immigrants, Refugees and Migrants.
 - ◇ **Get Vaccinated Campaign with materials in over 40 languages.**
 - ◇ **Customizable Multilingual COVID-19 Vaccine Posters and Social Media Templates.**

- ◆ **Multilingual COVID-19 Fact Sheet.**

- ◆ **Vaccine Conversation Guide.**

Partisan audiences: A poll of GOP voters conducted by the **deBeaumont Foundation** found that respondents were more willing to consider getting vaccinated if encouraged by their doctor rather than a politician. Emphasizing the benefits of getting vaccinated is more effective than reiterating consequences of not getting vaccinated. Avoid judgmental language, acknowledge concerns and reiterate the vaccine's safety (e.g., "Every study, and every phase of every trial, was carefully reviewed and approved by a safety board at the FDA.").

- ◆ deBeaumont Foundation: **Language that works to Improve Vaccine Acceptance and Changing the COVID Conversation** include messaging about COVID-19 vaccines for GOP voters.

- ◆ **Ad Council community ambassador outreach webinar** with Fox News moderator Dana Perino talking about how to have difficult conversations about the COVID-19 Vaccine.

Families with children and youth in the household: According to the deBeaumont Foundation, family doctors, pediatricians and pharmacists are the most trusted sources of information and most likely to be able to influence a parent to vaccinate their child. Reiterate messages about how the vaccine can protect children from the unknown long-term impacts of COVID-19. Focus on how vaccines will allow children to be in school and "get the education they want, need and deserve."

- ◆ **CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations for Adolescents.**

- ◆ **Vaccine Perceptions Among Parents of Teenagers**, de Beaumont Foundation.

Communities experiencing houselessness: To reach people who move around the city frequently, **CDC** recommends advertising vaccination events in many ways and places—post flyers in encampments, shelters and on public transportation; make announcements at service programs and clinics; and send messages via text, email, social media, television and radio. Remember that people experiencing houselessness are less likely to seek medical services in a traditional setting, such as a pharmacy or doctor's office; host vaccine clinics at places like shelters and food distribution locations.

- ◆ **CDC COVID-19 Vaccination for People Experiencing Houselessness: FAQ.**

- ◆ **CDC Interim Guidance for Health Departments: COVID-19 Vaccination Implementation for People Experiencing Houselessness.**

People living with disabilities: Living with a disability does not inherently put someone at a higher risk of getting COVID-19, but living at a care home or having regular contact with health care providers, who see many patients, can increase a person's chances of being infected. People living with a disability are more likely to have underlying conditions that could put them at a higher risk of contracting serious symptoms from COVID-19. Make information accessible to people living with disabilities, says the **American Association on Health and Disability**, by using simple language, providing ASL interpreters at vaccine clinics, and duplicating materials in braille and/or large text. Finally, make sure vaccine clinics are hosted at ADA compliant locations.

- ◆ **CDC Toolkit for People with Disabilities** and **COVID-19 Vaccine Information for People with Disabilities**.
- ◆ **CDC Easy to Read COVID-19 Informational Materials** for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.
- ◆ Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation at Georgia Tech: **COVID-19 Accessible Resources**, with braille resources, ASL resources, simplified text resources and video resources about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Tools for use with specific sectors and partners

◆ **Health care providers and health systems**

- ◇ CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit.
- ◇ CDC Pediatric Healthcare Professionals COVID-19 Vaccination Toolkit.

◆ **Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)**

- ◇ CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Community Toolkit.
- ◇ Community Education Toolkit – Ad Council.

◆ **Businesses and Employers**

- ◇ **Health Action Alliance:** Tools for employers of all types and sizes to help set vaccine policies, communicate with workers, and support employee and community vaccination.
- ◇ **Preparing Your City Workforce for COVID-19 Vaccine – NLC and Health Action Alliance.**

◆ **Faith-Based Communities**

- ◇ United Methodist Health Ministry Fund: **Congregational Conversations on COVID-19 Vaccination, A Guide to Talking to Your Congregation.**
- ◇ **Black Faith COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit.**
- ◇ **Hispanic Faith COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit.**

◆ **Educational Institutions**

- ◇ CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for Institutions of Higher Education, Community Colleges, and Technical Schools.
- ◇ CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for Staff in School Settings and Childcare Programs.
- ◇ CDC 6 Ways Schools Can Promote COVID-19 Vaccines.

◆ **Youth as peer educators and leaders**

- ◇ YMCA: **Youth Vaccine Peer Educator Dialogue.**
- ◇ **White House COVID-19 College Vaccination Challenge.**

