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Equitable Vaccine Implementation: Reaching People Where They Are

As COVID-19 vaccines roll out in communities around the country, it is important to [ensure equitable access for all populations](#), especially people who:

- are at increased risk for COVID-19,
- face systemic health and social inequities, and
- have barriers to vaccination like accessibility, proximity to services, mobility, technology, and transportation.

Making it as easy as possible for communities to get vaccinated by bringing vaccine access to multiple settings can increase the number of individuals who receive the vaccine. Equitable access to vaccination can help reduce COVID-19 in communities at disproportionate risk.

Ensuring Equitable Vaccine Implementation

- **Establish a vaccine ethics group.** Ensure state and local vaccination plans prioritize equitable vaccine access and implementation to have the greatest impact in reducing morbidity and mortality. The Interim Operational Guidance for Jurisdictions Playbook recommends that [vaccine ethics groups](#) include:
 - » leadership from a jurisdiction's planning and coordination team,
 - » key vaccination providers for [priority groups](#),
 - » representatives from other sectors, which may include community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, health systems and hospitals, and businesses.
- **Consider how your audience communicates.** Ensure that communication messages and materials are available in languages other than English. Provide educational materials across multiple communication channels and tailored to different literacy levels. Communication materials used throughout the vaccination process also need to meet the **necessary requirements** of disability rights laws for accessibility, including American Sign Language, braille, and easy-to-read materials with large text and pictures or visual cues.

- **Ensure vaccination clinics are accessible and have accommodations for different groups.**
 - » Have interpreters available for non-English languages and American Sign Language.
 - » Ensure you have personnel on each shift who have experience working with older adults and people with disabilities.
 - » Make sure vaccination sites are accessible with handrails and ramps for people who rely on service animals, assistive equipment, or wheelchairs.
 - » Follow [CDC recommendations for preventing the spread of COVID-19](#), such as social distancing and mask wearing for those who are able to wear a mask.
 - » Provide sufficient seating for those waiting for vaccination and during the post-vaccination observation period.
 - » Offer a variety of ways for people to make their vaccination appointments, including some that do not require internet access.
- **Use mobile vaccination teams and facilities.** Establish a team of people to bring vaccine into communities, including to people who live in rural areas, are experiencing homelessness, or are homebound. Equip vans with cold storage, freezers, generators, and vaccination stations. Make sure accessibility is incorporated into planning for walk-in, curbside, drive-through, and other types of vaccination clinics.
- **Be flexible with hours of operation for vaccination sites.** Ensure vaccination sites are open during a variety of hours, including evenings and weekends, to accommodate different work schedules.
- **Minimize collection of personally identifiable information.** Allow migrant, seasonal, and mobile workers to be vaccinated in your state, even if they don't have a driver's license or other identification with an in-state or in-county address. Inform workers that race, ethnicity, or other information being collected is only being used to ensure fair and equitable vaccine distribution. Mobile workers are part of the community while they are working in the area.
- **Capitalize on existing infrastructure.** Use existing health clinics, local pharmacies, or sports stadiums to bring vaccine to communities. In communities that are medically underserved, consider identifying existing facilities and infrastructure, like churches or community centers, that could be used as vaccination sites. Ensure vaccination sites are set up in neighborhoods with a range of socioeconomic statuses. Ensure there are available public transportation options to reach the vaccination sites.



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Reaching Essential Workers

- **Engage authentic and trusted sources.** Trade organizations, community groups, labor organizations, and employers can be trusted messengers and provide targeted outreach. They can help ensure people understand that the vaccine is available to them at no cost, boost [vaccine confidence](#), and support access to vaccination clinics.
- **Connect with employers.** To reach food systems and agriculture workers, contact the [Departments of Agriculture](#) or the [Association of Food and Drug Officials](#) or [state food and drug officials](#). The [local chambers of commerce](#) can connect you with small businesses that employ essential workers.
- **Encourage employers to adopt flexible human resources policies.** Ask them to allow employees to get vaccinated during work hours. Suggest they provide paid leave for employees to seek COVID-19 vaccination in the community. Propose that employers assist with transportation to off-site vaccination clinics. It is also important that employers provide flexible leave policies for employees who may have post-vaccination symptoms.
- **Provide easy access to vaccination for all workers on site.** All workers should have access to vaccine, regardless of their status as a contract or temporary worker. If needed, you should [prioritize employees for vaccination](#) based on job tasks—not employment status.
- **Offer multiple opportunities for vaccination.** Workers who are hesitant at first may become more confident after seeing coworkers get vaccinated.

Reaching Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

- **Work with the state Medicare and Medicaid offices.** Consider establishing a helpline so that community members who need to be vaccinated can call and be routed to the closest vaccination facility based on their zip code.
- **Use an [Area Agency for Aging](#) database.** The Area Agency for Aging can help identify people who are homebound and then schedule vaccination appointments.
- **Use a variety of communication channels.** Not all people have access to, or are comfortable with, using digital technology. Identify alternate communication channels to reach them where they are with vaccination information.
- **Assist with transportation to vaccination clinics.** Getting to a doctor's office or clinic to get vaccinated may be a challenge for older adults or people with disabilities, so consider providing transportation options or collaborating with organizations that provide services to people who are homebound.

Additional Resources and References

CDC | [COVID-19 Response Health Equity Strategy](#)

CDC | [Ensuring Equity in COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution](#)

CDC | [Essential Workers COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit](#)

National Governors Association | [Supporting an Equitable Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

