

A campaign to increase vaccine confidence while reinforcing basic prevention measures



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# User Guide for the Rural Communities Toolkit

This material is intended for all organizations that communicate directly with rural audiences.

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*Content last reviewed: May 20, 2021*

# Your Role as an Advocate for Rural Residents

As a trusted partner to rural residents, you're in an important position to share crucial COVID-19 information and increase confidence in the COVID-19 vaccines.

You've built a rapport, so community members trust you and understand that you support their well-being.

Because of your connection to the community, you know how to reach and inspire them.

You can educate community members on the COVID-19 vaccines by sharing clear, complete, and accurate messages.

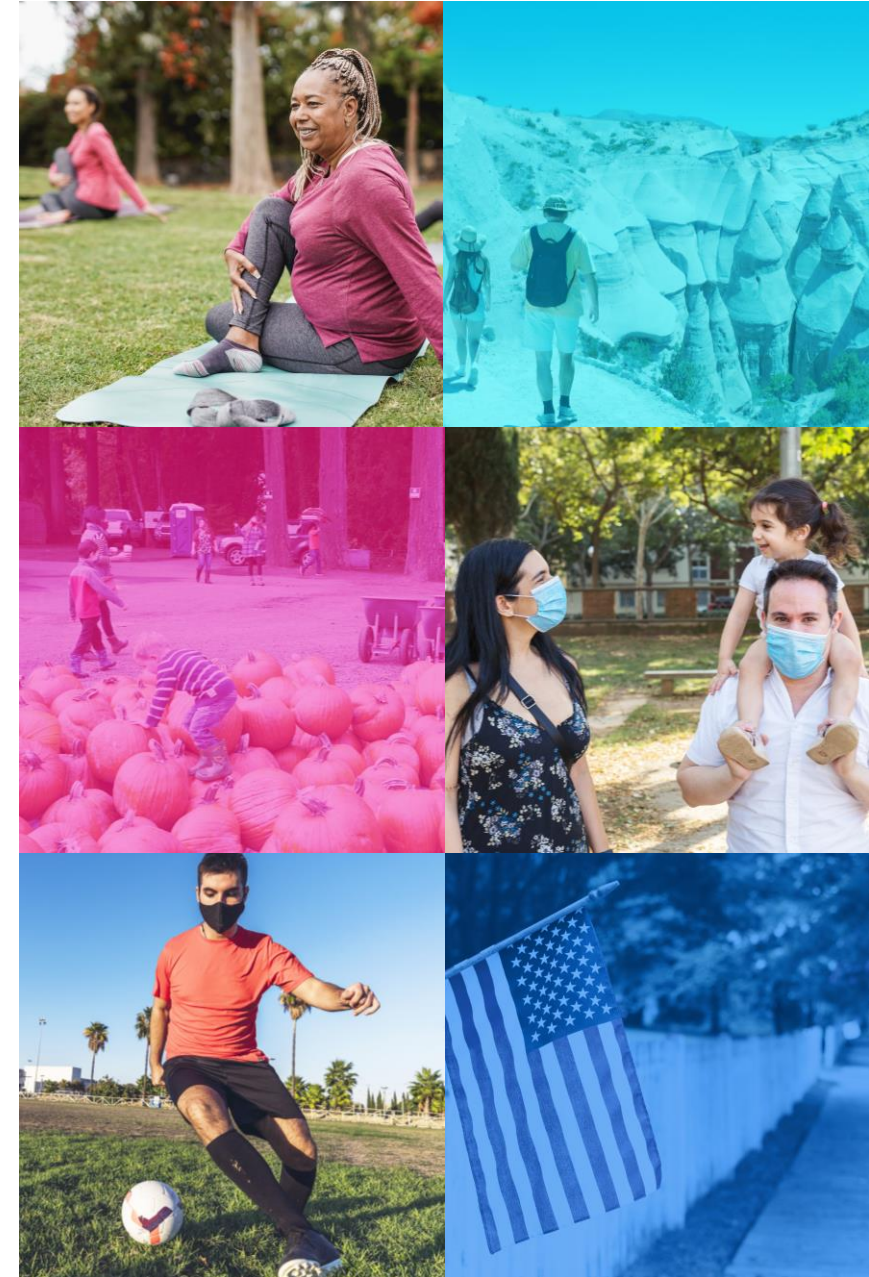


# Purpose and Goals

This toolkit features tailored materials you can use to educate rural residents about the COVID-19 vaccines and to increase their confidence in the vaccines while reinforcing basic preventive measures.

This toolkit features newly developed and culturally tailored materials, including fact sheets and an infographic, from the [HHS COVID-19 public education campaign](#).

We'll regularly update this toolkit, so please check back for new materials.



# Fact Sheets

These fact sheets will answer some of the most frequently asked questions about the vaccines for rural audiences. They also contain information on ways to meet the basic and health care needs of rural communities during the pandemic.

## Suggestions for use:

- Post them on your website.
- Mail them along with your direct mailings.
- Add them to your newsletters.
- Post them at an information center in your organization if you have one.

## Ways to Ensure Your Community Gets COVID-19 Vaccines



### Ways to Ensure Your Community Gets COVID-19 Vaccines

Rural communities have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people in rural communities are at increased risk for COVID-related severe illness, hospitalization, and death because of chronic health conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. At the same time, many rural communities have limited access to health care, meaning they may also have limited access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccines are an important tool in ending the COVID-19 pandemic. As a rural leader, you can help bridge the COVID-19 vaccine access gap and ensure members of your community get COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they can.

#### How to Bridge the COVID-19 Vaccine Access Gap

##### Promote the preventive measures in your community

First and foremost, make sure your community members know about the important ways they can protect themselves and others from getting and spreading COVID-19 and ultimately the pandemic:

- Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can. You have three ways to find vaccines near you:
  - Go to [vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov)
  - Text your ZIP code to 438829
  - Call 1-800-232-0233
- Until you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose):
  - Wear a mask over your nose and mouth when inside public places.
  - Stay at least 6 feet (two arm lengths) away from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
  - Avoid being in crowds.
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - Avoid gatherings in poorly ventilated indoor spaces.

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## About the COVID-19 Vaccines



### About the COVID-19 Vaccines

#### What You Can Do as a Rural Leader in Your Community to Share Information About the COVID-19 Vaccines

A trusted community member can effectively deliver messages that motivate people to get a COVID-19 vaccine and engage in other positive health behaviors.

Rural communities are diverse, so you'll need to customize your messaging about the COVID-19 vaccines to account for the local culture of your community.

- Pair the general COVID-19 vaccine information below (Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines) with customized COVID-19 vaccination information for your community. Customized messaging creates trust and acceptance of the general information.
- Ensure local doctors and other providers know they can call CDC's Clinician On-Call Center, a 24-hour hotline for answering COVID-19 questions. Dial 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) and ask for the Clinician On-Call Center.
- Use free materials from CDC's toolkit (available in English and Spanish) to share key facts about the vaccines in newsletters, presentations, or to share or post in community settings.
- Check out the [Rural Health Information Hub](#) for innovative ideas for education and outreach.
- When you come across COVID-19 information, cross-check it with [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus) and learn how to respond to misinformation that you encounter.

#### Key Things to Share About COVID-19 Vaccines

##### The benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine

COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there's no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you or your loved ones. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others in your community.

COVID-19 vaccination is an important tool to help stop the pandemic. All COVID-19 vaccines that are currently available in the United States prevent nearly 100% of hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. You should get a vaccine as soon as you can.

##### The different available vaccines

Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are currently available in the United States. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the vaccines only after confirming that they were proven safe and effective in medical studies involving tens of thousands of volunteers like you.

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## Meeting the Needs of Rural Communities



### Meeting the Needs of Rural Communities

#### How to Support the Basic and Behavioral Health Needs of Your Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on all our lives. Adults and children alike are stressed and overwhelmed by its challenges. Many of us have felt isolated and lonely because we have been keeping our distance to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Resources are available to help community members with their stress and other personal problems they might be experiencing. As a trusted rural community leader, you can use the following resources to have honest conversations and help the members of your community get the support they need.

##### Support for people's basic needs

- People in your community may be eligible for extra financial help to cover [food](#), [housing](#), [and bills](#).
- Several other [resources for individuals and families seeking food assistance](#) are available.
- The [locator for websites](#) is a searchable map for finding free food assistance programs near you.
- People who rent their homes have certain [rent protections and support](#) available.
- Employers and workers should know about relevant [labor laws](#), [safety issues](#), [wage and hour laws](#), and [unemployment insurance](#).
- Eligible veterans, their spouses, and their caregivers [can get a COVID-19 vaccine through VA](#).
- Farmers in your community may be eligible for [financial and other help](#).
- The Rural Health Information Hub's [Rural Response to Communities Release 2019 \(RCOVID19\)](#) has COVID-19 information specific to rural communities.

##### Support for people's behavioral health needs

- [Bereavement](#) is an online tool to help people cope with feelings of grief, loss, and worry during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Employee assistance programs](#) offer free and confidential resources to help individuals connect with local, skilled, and trained counselors.

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# Infographics

Infographics are a great visual resource for sharing facts and dispelling myths.

## Suggestions for use:

- Add them to your newsletters.
- Post them on your website.
- Ask community partners to place the infographics in their facilities.
- Post them at an information center in your organization if you have one.

## Protect Your Community and Yourself With a COVID-19 Vaccine

### PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY AND YOURSELF WITH A COVID-19 VACCINE



A COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others from infection.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and here now. Strong confidence in the vaccines within communities will lead to more people getting vaccinated, which will lead to fewer COVID-related illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths.



As a rural leader, you can do the following to build COVID-19 vaccine confidence in your community:



Encourage people in your family, organization, and community to be vaccine champions and to share testimonials about why they got vaccinated.



Have discussions about COVID-19 vaccines, so people can share their views and ask questions. Ask local doctors, nurses, or other health care professionals to help answer people's questions.



Share [key messages](#) about vaccine safety through multiple channels that people trust, such as local radio stations, schools, and in faith-based settings.



Help educate people about [COVID-19 vaccines](#), including how they were developed and monitored for safety and how individuals can talk to others about the vaccines.



Learn more about [finding credible vaccine information](#). When you come across COVID-19 information, cross-check it with [cdc.gov/coronavirus](#) and learn how to respond to misinformation that you encounter.



Make your decision to get vaccinated [visible](#) and celebrate it.

You have three ways to find vaccines near you:

- Go to [vaccines.gov](#)
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-800-232-0233

For more information about protecting yourself and others from COVID-19, visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](#).



**Thank you for advocating  
for and informing your  
rural community!**

