

CHAMPIONING COVID-19 VACCINE FOR OLDER ADULTS AND STAFF IN LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS

GSA National Adult Vaccination Program



COVID-19 vaccines will help bring an end to the pandemic, and our success relies on people willing to be vaccinated. One proven way to improve uptake of vaccines is to identify a champion. **An immunization champion** can be a trusted community leader, health care professional, or anyone interested in sharing evidence-based information about COVID-19 vaccines. The following messages and strategies are compiled to help champions of COVID-19 vaccines improve uptake by staff and residents in **long-term care facilities**.

Use Tested Messages

Know your audience and use messages that resonate with them. Recent research shows that the following messages engender support when speaking about COVID-19 vaccine, particularly in traditionally underrepresented communities, such as African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Indigenous/Native American, as well as with frontline workers.

“The FDA is publicly sharing information about COVID-19 vaccines so you can see the evidence for yourself.”

“Only safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines that have been rigorously tested on tens of thousands of volunteers will be approved.”

“Scientists and career public health officials, not politicians or their appointees, will decide when a COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and ready for public use.”

“By getting a COVID-19 vaccine, you are protecting yourself, your children, parents, grandparents, and other loved ones.”

“COVID-19 vaccine development is moving faster than normal because the medical and scientific community have made it their highest priority, not because any steps have been skipped.”

Source: Reagan-Udall Foundation. COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Project. December 15, 2020. <https://covid19.reaganudall.org/covid-19-vaccine-confidence-project>

Use Trusted Messengers

Encourage staff members who have been vaccinated to share the reasons why they chose to get vaccinated; they can impart their messages at staff meetings, in blog posts, or through other communication channels.



Leverage peers as champions and trusted vaccine messengers in these four ways:

- ▶ **Recognize that hesitancy is not monolithic.** Various people may have diverse concerns, and those concerns need to be individually addressed.
- ▶ **Learn from disinformation campaigns.** Use creative visuals and invite participation and feedback from other staff and residents.
- ▶ **Avoid offering false reassurance.** Acknowledge worries but respond with facts and evidence about what is known.
- ▶ **Shift traditional health messages to community-based, hopeful ones.** Depict how COVID-19 vaccine can restore community through herd immunity.

Source: Beckman AL, Forman HP, Omer SB. Four steps to help achieve COVID-19 vaccine adoption: how health professionals can embrace their role as messengers. Health Affairs. January 22, 2021. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.202010121.500910/full/>

Provide Education and Information to Staff and Residents

Use an assortment of strategies when providing education and information to staff and residents in long-term care settings, in order to provide multiple opportunities for questions to be asked and answered.



▶ **Give presentations for staff and medical directors** and invite questions.



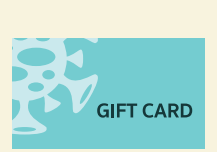
▶ **Remind and encourage those** who have yet to be vaccinated to get a COVID-19 vaccine by communicating with them via e-mails, letters, telephone calls, or in person requests.



▶ **Share video clips of health care assistant peers** from AMDA | The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine and National Association of Health Care Assistants



▶ **Make sure staff members and residents** (and their families) know where they can go to ask questions about the vaccine, including in person, by phone, or via email.



▶ **Organize contests or incentives** to get vaccinated (small gift cards, raffle prizes, pizza parties, etc.).

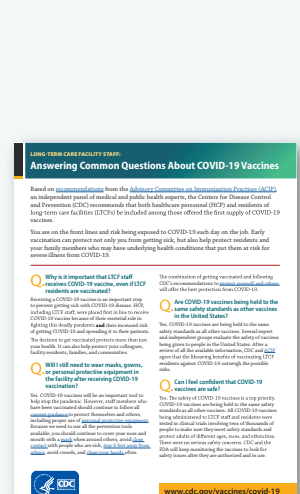


▶ **Host a virtual town hall meeting** as an open forum for questions and to address concerns.

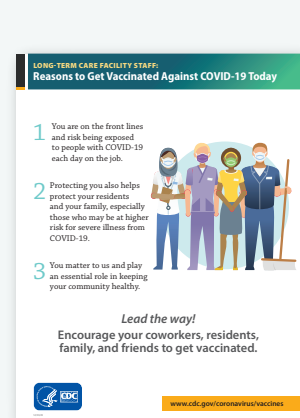
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Long-Term Care Facility Toolkit: Preparing for COVID-19 Vaccination at Your Facility. December 23, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/index.html>

Distribute Resources Such as Posters and Fact Sheets

Equip long-term care facilities with authoritative and influential communication tools to help increase interest and trust in the vaccine.



▶ **COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Older Adults** from The Gerontological Society of America



▶ **Fact Sheet – Long-Term Care Facility Staff: Answering Common Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines** from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

▶ **Printable stickers for staff to wear once they have been vaccinated** from the CDC



▶ **Poster – Long-Term Care Facility Staff: Reasons to Get Vaccinated Against COVID-19 Today** from the CDC

THANK YOU

for your work championing COVID-19 vaccination for staff and residents of long-term care facilities. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact covid19@geron.org.