

Improving Access to COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing for People with Disabilities

Health equity means all people, including people with disabilities, have access to the same level of health care, services, and supports. According to the American Public Health Association, health equity means “everyone has the opportunity to [reach] their highest level of health.”

To reach health equity, we need to understand and change the unfair treatment of minority populations in our country. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to show inequities for people with disabilities as many cannot access the same level of care and safety during the pandemic.

Common Barriers Experienced by People with Disabilities During COVID-19

- Many testing and vaccine sites are not accessible to people with disabilities, like people who use a wheelchair or use an ASL interpreter. Finding a physically accessible and welcoming COVID site can be very hard for many people.
- COVID-19 information and resources are often hard to understand
- Transportation to and from testing or vaccine sites is limited and unreliable
- At home COVID-19 tests can be hard to use. People who have trouble grabbing and holding things might struggle to use these tests. People who experience low vision may not be able to read the instructions or see their results.

What We Can Do

- Review testing or vaccine sites for accessibility. Questions to consider include:
 - Is there a step or door that could prevent someone using a wheelchair from getting in to the site?
 - Are there ASL interpreters available?
 - Is this site welcoming to people who may be easily distracted or overwhelmed?

- Write COVID-19 information in plain language. Using plain language means that people with intellectual disabilities or low reading levels can easily understand the information. Plain language also helps make translation of information into other languages easier for people who do not speak English.
- Make sure transportation is available and accessible to everyone in your area. Even though Lyft and Uber give free rides, these services may not have accessible vehicles.

Health care is a right for all people. The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Affordable Care Act are two important laws that help make sure people with disabilities have equal access. However, it is everyone's responsibility to continue to improve access to programs and services for people with disabilities. Health programs, services, and supports should work towards inclusion, meaning everyone can access opportunities fully.

[Click here to learn more about how we can move towards inclusion.](#)