

CLINICAL **ADVISORY**

January 2023

PharMerica

Strategies to Increase COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence and Uptake in Long-Term-Care Communities

Background

While COVID-19 vaccination remains a critical step in protecting individuals and communities from the COVID-19 virus, many Americans have still not been fully vaccinated, despite eligibility and adequate vaccine supply.

The long-term-care community has unique barriers and needs that require focused solutions and intervention strategies to increase vaccine confidence and vaccine uptake.

- **Vaccine confidence** is the belief that vaccines work, are safe, and are part of a trustworthy medical system. Without some level of confidence, people will not move toward receiving a vaccine.
- **Vaccine uptake** refers to the proportion of the population that has received a vaccine.

LTCF administrators may consider the strategies below to increase staff and resident confidence in the COVID-19 vaccines' safety and efficacy and increase uptake in their long-term care communities.

Elect Vaccine Champions

Appoint Vaccine Champions as ambassadors to train staff members to disseminate important COVID-19 vaccine information in their communities. Champions are most effective when fellow staff and residents trust and respect their opinion.

Anyone can be a Vaccine Champion; it is not restricted to leaders or people in clinical positions!

Discussing the risk of contracting disease and the decision to vaccinate impacts residents' decision to get vaccinated. Endorsements from a vaccine champion can help spread credible information about the COVID-19 vaccines. These efforts help increase vaccinations and overcome misinformation and distrust of institutions.

Action Steps:

- Empower Vaccine Champions to educate the community about the COVID-19 vaccines, notify residents of their vaccination eligibility, and spread the word about vaccination locations.
- Facilities can support Vaccine Champions by offering education opportunities to learn about public health, vaccination, health communication, and the COVID-19 vaccines.

Standardize COVID-19 Vaccination into Routine Practice

Create standard practice routines, such as offering the COVID-19 vaccine as a default option during provider visits and integrating vaccination into regular practice procedures, to reduce missed opportunities for vaccination.

Training staff on COVID-19 vaccination related topics, such as providing accurate information to residents with questions and standardizing scheduling for vaccine-eligible residents, lays the groundwork for integrating vaccination into routine practice.

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Action Steps:

- Encourage all providers to incorporate education and vaccination reminders as part of their routine resident care activities to achieve a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Use this four-step process at every resident encounter to help “SAVE” lives:
 - **Seek** residents’ COVID-19 vaccination status verbally or through immunization records (i.e., upon admission)
 - **Ask/Educate** unvaccinated residents about the vaccines, and offer more information if they’re unsure
 - **Vaccinate** residents who agree to be vaccinated, or refer them to a COVID-19 vaccine provider
 - **Empower** residents and staff to share their vaccination status with their friends, families, and communities

Provide Education to Residents and Staff

Effective education on the COVID-19 vaccine delivered by trusted messengers combats misinformation and improves vaccine confidence.

Action Steps:

- Provide frequent education to staff on the COVID-19 vaccine topics including order process, current guidelines, and vaccine documentation requirements.
- Include medical directors and nurse practitioners in providing education to residents and their family members and answer any COVID-19 vaccine related questions they may have.

Make It Convenient

Offer residents a convenient option to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, such as vaccine clinics or during routine appointments, to relieve barriers for residents with unreliable transportation or resistance to scheduling a vaccination.

Action Steps:

- Provide COVID-19 vaccination clinics as an opportunity for all eligible residents to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Reach out to your PharMerica account manager, mobile clinics, or local health department to manage process of ordering vaccines, tracking eligibility, administration, and documentation of vaccinations as needed.
- Develop vaccine dashboards and reporting tools to view resident and stakeholder vaccine status and eligibility.
- Bundle COVID-19 vaccine scheduling with other recommended vaccines the residents are due for (e.g., offer the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as the Influenza vaccine during flu season) to ensure residents stay up to date on all recommended vaccines for protection against infectious diseases.

Additional Information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided additional details on strategies to improve vaccine uptake and vaccinate with confidence in their [COVID-19 Vaccination Field Guide](#). Each facility should tailor their vaccination approach based on the individual needs and barriers of their unique residents and staff.