

COVID-19 Vaccines: Barriers, Motivators, and Trusted Sources of Information for Alaskans with Disabilities



UAA Center for
Human Development
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

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ALASKA COVID-19 VACCINE PARTNERSHIP

ABOUT US

WHO ARE WE?

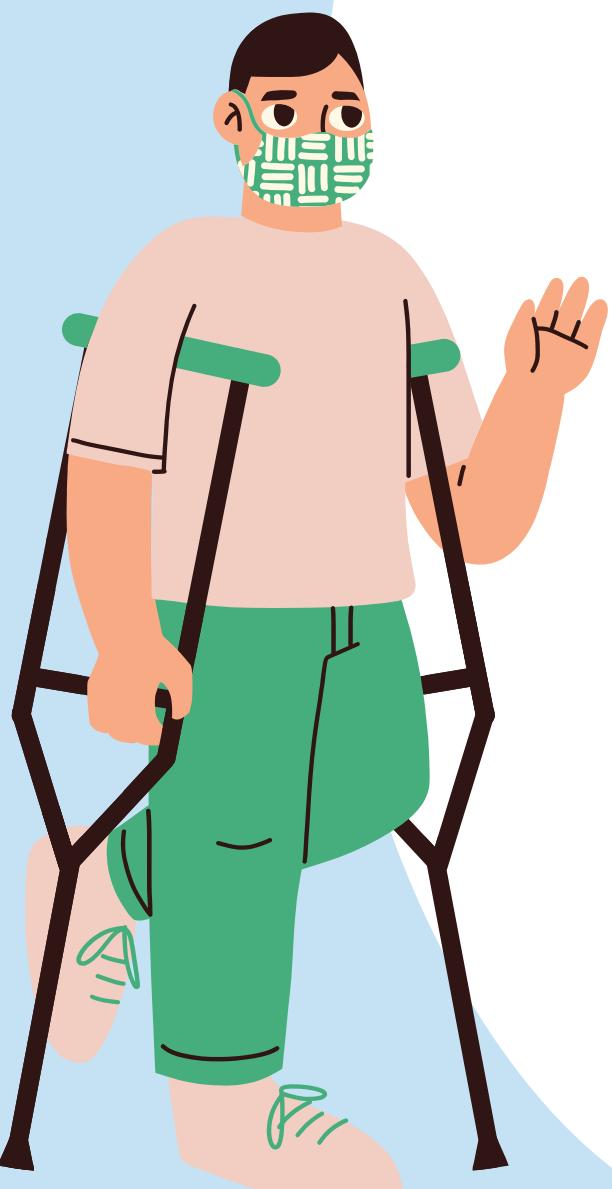
We are a group of people from organizations around Alaska who came together to form the Alaska COVID-19 Vaccine Accessibility Partnership. We represent the University of Alaska Center for Human Development, Disability Law Center of Alaska, Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska, State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

Our work was funded by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities and the US Department of Health and Human Services.

WHY DID WE FORM THIS PARTNERSHIP?

Our goal is to identify and reduce barriers for people with disabilities to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccines are widely available and safe. We want to make sure anyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccine can get one.

Why Focus on People with Disabilities?



- ✓ In the US, people with intellectual disabilities are more likely than people without intellectual disabilities to be hospitalized and die from COVID-19.
- ✓ Adults with disabilities were more likely than adults without disabilities to say they would definitely get the COVID-19 vaccine. They also were more likely to say the vaccine protects them.
- ✓ They were less likely to be fully vaccinated. This tells us that some people with disabilities want the vaccine, but face barriers to access the vaccine.
- ✓ We wanted to answer two questions. One, what motivates Alaskans with disabilities to get the COVID-19 vaccine? Two, who do they trust for vaccine information?

The COVID-19 Vaccine Survey



An online survey was created for people with disabilities and the people who care for them (care providers). The goal was to understand barriers to vaccine access and how to make the vaccine more easily available.

The Alaska COVID-19 Vaccine Partnership met several times to draft the survey questions. They adjusted sample questions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), knowledge from researchers, and related experiences from our partners.

The survey asked about barriers, motivators, and trusted sources of information for COVID-19 vaccines.

Who Answered the Survey?



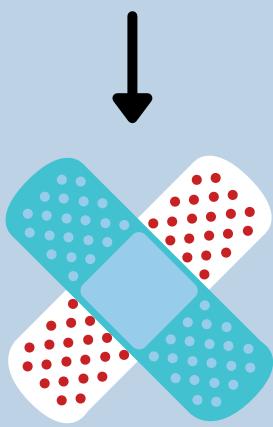
223 people answered



40 individuals with disabilities



183 disability care providers



When asked, most said they were fully vaccinated against COVID-19



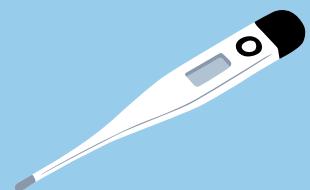
Most people were from Southcentral Alaska or live on the road system

BARRIERS

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES experienced these barriers to COVID-19 vaccination:



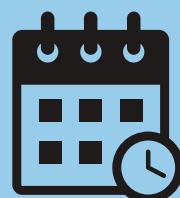
1 **They were concerned the vaccine will make medical condition(s) worse.**



2 **They couldn't take sick leave if they experienced side effects.**



3 **They were concerned about vaccine side effects.**



4 **It was difficult to find or make an appointment.**



5 **Vaccination sites were too far away.**



6 **They didn't know where to get vaccinated.**

BARRIERS

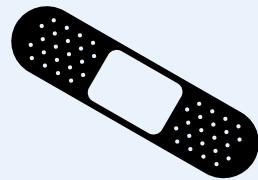
CARE PROVIDERS think that individuals with disabilities face these barriers to COVID-19 vaccination:



1 **They can't go on their own.**



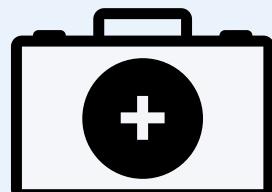
2 **They don't have transportation.**



3 **They're scared of shots.**



4 **They're concerned about vaccine side effects.**



5 **They don't trust the vaccine.**



6 **It is difficult for them to find or make an appointment.**

What Motivated Individuals with Disabilities to Get Vaccinated Against COVID-19?



1

Protecting their health

2

Protecting health of family/friends

3

Protecting health of community

4

Protecting health of co-workers



This question included a range of options, like resuming social activities or travel. Yet, individuals overwhelmingly chose options that related to protecting their health and the health of other community members.

TRUSTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

- 1 Primary care providers
- 2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- 3 Tribal health system
- 4 The State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)
- 5 Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- 6 Local health officials



CARE PROVIDERS THINK INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES MOST TRUST



- 1 Family and friends
- 2 Primary care providers
- 3 Elders
- 4 Faith leader(s)
- 5 Tribal health system
- 6 Pharmacists

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

We learned a lot from the results of the COVID-19 vaccine survey. Here are some key takeaways.

Vaccine Access

Finding a vaccine clinic, making an appointment, and/or finding transportation to a vaccine clinic are barriers for some individuals with disabilities.

Vaccine Motivators

Vaccinated individuals with disabilities rated protecting their health and the health of community members as their highest motivators.

Guardians

Guardians' beliefs about the COVID-19 vaccine may stop individuals with disabilities from getting the vaccine.

Trusted Sources

Individuals with disabilities' most trusted sources for COVID-19 vaccine information were primary care providers, the tribal health system, family and friends, and the CDC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We can use the results of this survey to better serve all Alaskans and improve access to the COVID-19 vaccine.



In this survey, individuals with disabilities said they had concerns about vaccine side effects. They also expressed concern that the vaccine would make current medical conditions worse. **Facebook and TV messaging focused toward people with multiple health conditions is one method to assure people that their concerns are heard.** Facebook and TV ads should highlight healthcare providers as *credible* sources who can answer specific questions about vaccine side effects.



It is important that healthcare providers offer information about the COVID-19 vaccine in ways that are accessible. Examples include clear language materials ([CDC Easy to Read COVID-19 Materials](#)), materials in American Sign Language ([CDC ASL Video Series](#)), and visual materials ([CDC Social Stories and Videos](#)).



Offering the COVID-19 vaccine to individuals in their homes or in places they frequent will help to remove barriers. This approach would benefit individuals who struggle with transportation or who must make complex arrangements to attend appointments.



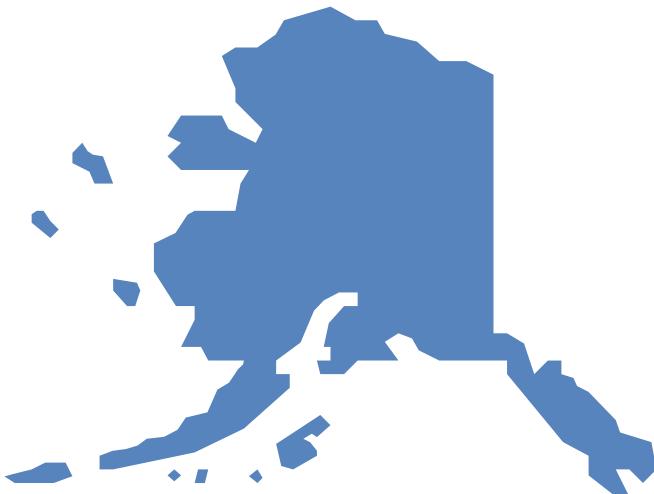
Several survey respondents said that guardians who are unsure about the vaccine are an additional barrier to getting the vaccine for the individual(s) they support. An individual with a disability has the right to join in decisions about their own healthcare. **Using an approach that includes the individual, the guardian, and the healthcare provider will ensure that accurate information is shared.** Listen to Ross and Michael's story about supported decision-making around the COVID-19 vaccine: [Ross and Michael Talk About the COVID-19 Vaccine](#).

SURVEY LIMITS AND INFORMATION SHARING

While it's impossible to design a perfect survey, we wanted to point out how this one could have been better.

SURVEY LIMITS

- There was an option for people to call and have the survey read to them. No one used the phone option. Therefore, people without internet access or with limited reading ability may have had difficulty completing the survey.
- This survey was offered in English only.
- Slider answer choices require fine-tuned movements and could have been difficult for mobile device users.
- We can't reach everyone through word-of-mouth. We can't assume our results apply to everyone with disabilities in Alaska.
- The survey may have appealed more to people who feel strongly about vaccines. Most people with disabilities who answered this survey were already vaccinated.
- Most people who answered the survey live in urban areas of Alaska. We had very few responses from rural areas.



SHARING THIS INFORMATION

We want to share what we learned with as many people as possible. If you would like us to present these findings to your group, our contact information is on the next page.

AUTHOR NOTES AND ALTERNATE FORMATS

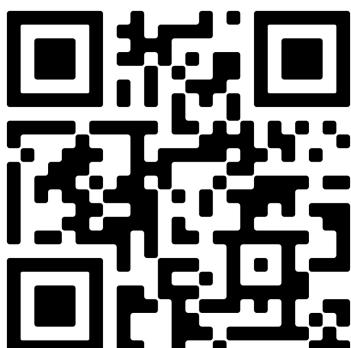
REQUESTS FOR PRESENTATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

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QR CODE FOR FULL RESEARCH REPORT:



SOURCES AND FUNDING

SOURCES

Gleason, J., Ross, W., Fossi, A., Blonsky H., Tobias, J., & Stephens, M (2021). The Devastating Impact of Covid-19 on Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in the United States. NEJM Catalyst, https://catalyst.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/CA_T.21.0051.

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