



Connect to End COVID-19:

Did You Know that there is a Low Uptake of COVID-19 vaccines?

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COVID-19 from pandemic to endemic

The COVID-19 pandemic, now endemic, has been a global health crisis that has devastated communities and taken many lives. One of the critical tools in our fight against this virus has been the development and distribution of effective vaccines. However, there is growing concern about the low uptake of these vital vaccines in many parts of the country. Sadly, over 1.1 million people have died of COVID-19 infection; most were unvaccinated, even though the vaccines were widely available. The facts are that vaccines are safe and highly effective; being up to date on vaccination is the best way to prevent severe COVID-related illnesses. However, fewer than 22% of Americans have received current vaccines. Vaccine uptake is significantly lower in special populations that are at risk of severe disease and death, such as Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, the uninsured and pregnant people. The Connect to End COVID-19, a national CDC-funded initiative, is helping social workers and their clients make informed decisions about life-saving vaccines and increasing vaccines to prevent hospitalizations and deaths from this deadly disease.

Vaccine hesitancy

Despite the proven safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines, vaccination rates remain alarmingly low in specific regions and communities. This is a troubling trend that has prolonged the pandemic, which today is an endemic that continues to put millions more lives at significant risk.

Research has identified various reasons people do not get vaccines, including mistrust and lack of awareness. Disparities in race and socioeconomic factors have contributed to the hesitancy in

[vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccines.](#)¹ Validated historical mistrust of the medical establishments by Black and African American communities has contributed to the low uptake of COVID-19 vaccines. We must address the underlying reasons for this low uptake and take proactive steps to encourage widespread vaccination. Through public education campaigns, social workers can tackle factors like vaccine hesitancy, misinformation, and lack of access head-on. The [Connect to End COVID-19](#) is an excellent campaign with numerous tools to educate professionals and the general public. There is no doubt that the stakes are high - increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates can save lives, protect vulnerable communities facing multiple other health challenges, and hasten the return to non-COVID normalcy we all desperately seek. Hence, social workers can redouble efforts and ensure these life-saving vaccines reach their clients and communities by visiting and utilizing the available resources on the [Connect to End COVID-19](#) website.

The United States faces a concerning trend of low uptake in COVID-19 vaccines, which seriously threatens public health and safety. Despite the widespread availability of effective vaccines, a significant portion of the population remains hesitant or unwilling to get vaccinated due to mistrust or misinformation. Social workers as allies can be an excellent resource for clients to make informed decisions about their vaccines.

This low vaccination rate is particularly alarming, given the ongoing risks posed by the COVID-19 endemic. The emergence of new variants, the potential for renewed outbreaks, and the strain on healthcare systems underscore widespread vaccination's critical importance.

How social workers can help

In addition to creating awareness about COVID-19, the initiative ensures that social workers develop skills in deploying motivational interviewing and similar modalities to help people process their vaccination decisions. These measures are vital, especially for vulnerable people with little access to life-saving vaccines. People can visit the [website](#) for more information on the initiative. For uptake rates among special populations, you can find this and extensive related information at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccine-delivery-coverage>

As trained professionals and allies, social workers can take proactive steps to address the underlying reasons for vaccine hesitancy and encourage greater participation in vaccination programs. Failure to do so could have devastating consequences for clients and communities nationwide. Social workers have built relationships with clients, which is integral to providing clients with the latest COVID-19 vaccine information so that they can make decisions for themselves. Social workers can visit the NASW website for training information to assist their clients. <https://naswmetrodc.socialworkers.org/Professional-Development/Connect-to-End-COVID-19/Vaccine-Confidence-Resources>

Social workers can learn more about COVID-19 resources, free training, and innovative ways to engage and support clients in making informed decisions using one of the links below.

¹ Na, L., Banks, S., & Wang, P. (2023). Mediators of racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 vaccine uptake. *Vaccine*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2023.02.079>

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Health/Vaccine-Confidence/About-the-Vaccine-Confidence-Project>

Myths and Facts

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Health/Vaccine-Confidence/Vaccine-Myths-and-Facts>

Myths and Facts Q&A

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Health/Vaccine-Confidence/Vaccine-Myths-and-Facts/Myths-and-Facts-Questions-and-Answers>

A Changing Landscape

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/COVID-19-Vaccine-Confidence/COVID-19-A-Changing-Landscape>

HHS/CDC Bridge Access Program

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/COVID-19-Vaccine-Confidence/HHS-CDC-Bridge-Access-Program>

MI-SBIRT

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/COVID-19-Vaccine-Confidence/MI-SBIRT>

Trainings (Complimentary Webinars and CEUs)

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Health/Vaccine-Confidence/Vaccine-Confidence-Training-for-Social-Workers>

CDC Resources

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Health/Vaccine-Confidence/CDC-Resources>

Toolkits

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/COVID-19-Vaccine-Confidence/Connect-to-End-COVID-19-Toolkits>

News Archive

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/COVID-19-Vaccine-Confidence/News-Archive>

Reference:

¹ Na, L., Banks, S., & Wang, P. (2023). Mediators of racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 vaccine uptake. *Vaccine*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2023.02.079>