

COVID-19 VACCINATION AND ADDICTION TREATMENT

A guide for addiction treatment clinicians and programs working to treat patients with substance use disorders safely and effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The dissemination of effective vaccines against the COVID-19 virus is a key strategy towards controlling the COVID-19 pandemic.

People with substance use disorders are at higher risk for COVID-19 infections and serious sequelae than the general population. In addition, higher risk is well-known to occur in populations residing in congregate housing, which can include residential and inpatient levels of care as well as housing programs serving people with addiction.

Insufficient vaccine acceptance may promote additional virus variants and persistent transmission and illness, placing patients with addiction and their providers at ongoing risk of infection. Addiction treatment clinicians and programs play key roles in promoting access to and uptake of COVID-19 vaccine.

Consider the following strategies:

1. Be prepared to provide accurate vaccine information

Educational initiatives to increase knowledge and awareness of the safety and efficacy of vaccination can be done using in-house, respected staff or through partnerships with local health departments or other experts.

2. Focus on under vaccinated populations

Consider partnering with community organizations to approach patients and staff who are reluctant to get vaccinated with transparency and respect. Tailor the information provided to the specific concerns or information gaps among these populations. One-on-one, nonjudgmental, respectful conversations with a trusted community member has anecdotally proven effective in increasing vaccine acceptance in many situations.

3. Consider becoming a vaccination site

Changes in the vaccine supply will require the planning process to be as flexible as possible to accommodate a variety of scenarios.

Resources

- Strategies for addressing vaccine hesitancy
https://www.who.int/immunization/sage/meetings/2014/october/3_SAGE_WG_Strategies_addressing_vaccine_hesitancy_2014.pdf
- CDC's COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs for Healthcare Professionals
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/faq.html>
- CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Requirements and Support
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/vaccination-provider-support.html>
- The COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Operational Guidance for Jurisdictions Playbook
https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/downloads/Covid-19-Vaccination-Program-Interim_Playbook.pdf

