



# Vaccine Distribution & Survivor Safety Considerations for Homeless Service Providers

Local homeless services providers may encounter survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking who need to be vaccinated for COVID-19. To meet the needs of this community, providers should ensure that survivors are equipped with the information they need to make a choice about whether or not to receive a vaccine, and that they are served in a [trauma-informed](#) way that protects their physical and emotional health and safety through every step of the process. Service providers hosting a vaccination event or facilitating the participation of survivors of domestic violence in vaccination at a community-based location should think through the following considerations.

## Gaining Vaccine Access for Survivors

- Acknowledge the trauma that the survivor has experienced and offer a referral to a local Victim Service Provider (VSP). Take the survivor's lead on how their needs will best be met.
- Actively listen to survivor concerns about safety and taking the vaccine. Support their autonomy in making an educated decision.
- Learn who is currently eligible for vaccines in your state and which subpopulations may be next and cross-reference this information with your Homeless Management System (HMIS) or comparable database to identify eligible recipients.
- Provide [services and supports](#) such as childcare onsite during vaccine events to make participation easier for survivors.

## Trauma-Informed Support for Decision-Making

- Acknowledge the trauma caused by and the lingering distrust of helping systems, particularly with survivors who identify as [Black, Indigenous, or people of color](#) (BIPOC).
- Be upfront about the information that will be collected from the survivor and the reasons why the information is being collected, including where the information will be stored. This may require the service provider to coordinate in advance with public health partners.
- Talk with survivors about [side effects](#) that may result from receiving the vaccine and prepare for any downtime they may need to take afterward. Remind them of the benefits of protecting themselves and their loved ones against COVID-19.
- Help prepare appointment documentation with the survivor and educate staff about the documentation required to receive vaccines in your state. Appropriate documentation may include a letter from the organization and a program identification card, including state or federally issued identification.

## Vaccination Site Safety

Survivors may have additional concerns about participating in an offsite or public vaccination event; however, additional steps can be taken to make the event as safe as possible for all survivors and staff. As you plan for vaccination for survivors, consider approaches that include:

Partnership and Coordination with Local VSPs	Vaccination Site Safety	Data and Information Confidentiality and Safety
<p>Prior to hosting vaccine distribution events at your shelter or facilitating access to a remote vaccine site, work with VSPs to develop plans for site safety and identify educational resources for all staff involved on trauma-informed approaches to care.</p>	<p>If survivors are participating in a vaccination event in a community-based setting, coordinate with public health partners on enhanced confidentiality protocols. This could include designating staff to vaccinate survivors; offering a private room where a survivor can register, get vaccinated, and be observed away from others; and/or allowing survivors to be vaccinated at the beginning or very end of an event.</p>	<p>If using HMIS or a comparable database to collect vaccine distribution information, honor survivor safety and confidentiality by only collecting the minimal amount of information needed that can safely be communicated without compromising the confidentiality of a survivor in a shelter. Breaches of confidentiality can result in serious safety concerns, possible child protective services investigations, or loss of child custody in some cases. Breaches of confidentiality are also violations of trust that could result in clients returning to unsafe housing situations.</p>
<p>Identify and coordinate additional resources that VSPs can contribute to the vaccination event such as advocacy support or legal services. If possible, have a staff member from the VSP present during the vaccination event to offer this information.</p>	<p>Have security on site during the vaccine event. Explore partnerships with the local police force to ensure the safe transportation of survivors to offsite locations.</p>	<p>Per the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), and Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) <a href="#">requirements</a>, all releases allowing an advocate or case manager to share a survivor’s personally identifiable information must be <b>written, informed, and time-limited</b>.</p>
<p>Request assistance with <a href="#">transportation</a> to offsite or public vaccination sites from staff, volunteers, and peer support specialists from local VSPs.</p>	<p>Talk with survivors about the potential safety risks of receiving the vaccine in a community-based setting so they know what to expect and explain the safety precautions being taken to protect them during the event. Describe the staff training, partnerships, security, or other measures designed to protect them. Work together to think of ways to mitigate safety risks and maximize benefits.</p>	<p>Be wary of any “public health official” requesting information about a survivor. Abusers may impersonate others to locate their victims. Have processes in place so staff know how to appropriately address a phone, email, or in-person inquiry of this nature.</p>
<p>Discuss response plans in case a survivor participating in a vaccine event is fleeing a lethal situation and in need of immediate safe shelter, transfer, or other support.</p>	<p>Work with the local public health department in advance to identify administrating staff when possible. Have a response plan in place in case the individual administering the vaccine is also the individual who has caused harm to the survivor.</p>	<p>Review <a href="#">confidentiality</a> best practices with staff.</p>
<p>Review <a href="#">confidentiality</a> best practices with VSP staff and educate homeless services staff.</p>		<p>Discuss the issuance of a vaccine card with the survivor, if applicable. They may be offered a card to document the type of vaccine administered and the appointment date/time to receive a second dose. The survivor may choose not to include personally identifying information such as their address and phone number on the card.</p>