

VACCINATION DAY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Tips for Family Advocates

The following tips may support you in preparing the person with a disability for their vaccination day. You know your loved one best, so please use the tips that make the most sense!

- Provide opportunities for the person to ask questions about the vaccination experience ahead of time.
- Consider writing a social story with the person. If you are unfamiliar with social stories, an online search will produce many resources.
- Write down phrases and/or words that may help the person feel safe and focus on the importance of why they are receiving the vaccine. For example, writing one of the following phrases on a notecard: “The vaccine will help me stay safe,” “Once I am vaccinated, I can go to more places and see my friends who have also been vaccinated,” “I can hold my sister’s hand while I get the vaccine,” or “I can take deep breaths and count to ten if I feel nervous.”
- Practice going through the vaccination steps on a visual schedule. If you are unfamiliar with visual schedules, an online search will produce many resources.
 - Have a trusted person role-play and pretend to “administer” the vaccine to the person. Switch roles and have the person “administer” the vaccine to a trusted person. If you plan on giving any information to the person administering the vaccine, do so when practicing the steps.
 - Review images and videos of other people receiving their vaccine and explain the process that they can expect. Refer to your visual schedule.
- Make a list of items and activities that may help the person remain calm. Take these items with you on the day of the vaccination.
 - Sensory items like playdough, weighted blankets, a photo album of preferred places and people or of favorite memories.
 - Earphones – noise cancellations or to play their favorite music
 - Electronics to engage with while waiting in line, during, or after receiving the vaccine.
 - Consider bringing a folding chair in case the wait is long.

- Have the person choose their favorite person to support them during the vaccination process. This may be a family member or trusted staff.
- If appropriate, support the person in choosing a preferred video to watch and use as a focal point during the vaccination procedure.
- If the person is motivated by taking pictures or being video recorded, consider creating a documentary of their experience to show to others. This may help them remain focused on their “performance.”
- On the day of, share any preferences for care with the medical staff when checking into the appointment. If possible, ask if you can briefly speak with the medical staff who will be vaccinating the person to provide information that may help the appointment run smoothly.
 - Evaluate if the person will benefit from verbal instructions or the use of gestures on the day of the vaccination. Share this with personnel at the vaccination site.
 - The site may have a quiet room to receive the vaccine that might work better.
- During vaccination, utilize the above-mentioned visual schedule to cross off steps as you go.
- Have a highly motivating activity planned for after the vaccination experience.