

Making It Plain

What People of Color Need to Know About Vaccines & Dealing With Health Care Disparity

Church Resource Tool Kit

The Role of Faith-based and Community Leaders

Faith-based and community leaders continue to be valuable sources of comfort and support for their members and communities during times of distress, including the growing presence of COVID-19 in different parts of the country. As such, these leaders have the unique ability to address potential concerns, fears, and anxieties regarding COVID-19. Additionally, by reiterating simple hygienic precautions and practices, these leaders can broadly promote helpful information, managing fear and stigma, and restoring a sense of calm into the lives of those in their care.

Such leaders are also poised — through their acts of service and community relationships — to reach vulnerable populations with essential information and assistance. These acts of service are an essential part of the safety net for the vulnerable in their communities. (The Partnership Center – Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)

Vaccine Dashboards/Trackers

- **For updates on the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) dedicated website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
Also available in Spanish: <https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>
- **For updates on the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in State of Maryland**, refer to <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/#Vaccine>

Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy

- **How to Reassure Black Americans That the Vaccine Is Safe:**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/30/opinion/promote-black-vaccination.html>
- **Coronavirus vaccines face trust gap in Black and Latino communities, study finds**
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/11/23/covid-vaccine-hesitancy/>

Vaccine Webinars/Videos

- **Making it Plain: What Black America Needs to Know about COVID-19 Vaccines- Black Coalition Against COVID (Released 1/7/21):**
<https://youtu.be/fv2qR6xniq4>
- **Faith, Science and Trust – African American Clergy & Community Conversation on COVID-19 (Released 1/25/21)**
<https://youtu.be/9Cialm4ZDFU>

Addressing COVID Concerns

What Should I Tell People Who Are Concerned?

Reassure them that your faith- or community-based organization, as well as local, state, and national authorities, is taking all necessary precautions to ensure their health and safety. Your response can soothe concerns and create an atmosphere of calm. The best way to prevent illness is to practice routine and common sense hygiene practices. These everyday practices also help to prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including the flu:

- **Stay home when you are sick**, except to get medical care.
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue** and then throw the used tissue in the trash.
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds**, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**.
- **Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands**, especially your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Clean high-contact surfaces and objects thoroughly and repeatedly**.

Leaders may find it helpful to review the guidance provided by the CDC in its "[Interim Guidance: Get Your Community- and Faith-Based Organizations Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)."

How Can We Advise the Elderly, Those with Special Health Considerations, Their Caregivers, and Other High-Risk Populations?

Provide special consideration in communicating risk to vulnerable populations in your community, including older adults and others with access and/or functional needs. Assign, or encourage those whom you serve to seek out, a "buddy" who will check in on and help care for them, should they get sick.

Make plans to stay connected.

- Ensure community contact lists are up-to-date and that 'calling trees' — or other practices to account for individuals who may be living alone, elderly, and vulnerable — are in place.
- Convey ways they can stay connected via virtual worship, gatherings, and staff and leadership meetings.
- Ensure there are clear means to communicate any "connection plans" with them.

Additional information for Communities of Faith

- **Recommended Preventative Practices and FAQs for Faith-based and Community Leaders:**
<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/3-17-20-faith-and-community-based-covid-19-faq.pdf>
- **Considerations for Communities of Faith**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>
- **Toolkit for Community and Faith-Based Organizations**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/toolkits/community-faith-based.html>

COVID-19 TOP TEN TIPS FOR PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL CARE

From Rev. Jonathan Lewis at
Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare in Memphis, TN



1. STAY CONNECTED

One of our deepest wells for mental and spiritual health is experiences and conversations with each other. Reach out to each other, even virtually (and one-on-one!).



2. ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

Try to move past the usual "How are you doing?" And be more specific when you are checking in with people. "What have the last few days been like for you? How is that affecting you? What's been the hardest part about all of this for you?"



3. GIVE CARING ANSWERS

Be a non-anxious presence, someone that people want to talk to, and respond with empathy. Acknowledge the feelings and questions people have: "You are having a normal reaction to a very abnormal event."



4. GET ORGANIZED

Make a schedule for your day to reduce your own uncertainty and anxiety. Make time for things like exercise, prayer, emails, and who and when you're going to call or video conference



5. BE CREATIVE

There are so many great ideas out there. You have probably seen some of them. Respond to individual preferences. Know your people and what sort of conversations and activities speak to them the most.



6. GET QUIET

Meditation and prayer of all kinds are proven to reduce anxiety, so practice those for yourself and for each other. Make place in that prayer for quiet and stillness. Seek new ways to meditate and practice mindfulness.



7. GET SMART

There is bound to be a lot of bad and anxiety-inducing information out there, so stick to the good stuff, and limit the rest. Follow the leading experts such as the CDC, WHO, NIH and your local and state health departments and providers.



8. GOT FEELINGS?

Got feelings? Talk about feelings. Ask about feelings. Sometimes people are hesitant to talk about specific feelings, and that's OK, but it can be therapeutic to identify a feeling and what it means.



9. KNOW WHEN TO TEAM UP

Who can help you provide care to your folks? What church members or community partners have gifts and talents they can share with others, especially online right from their homes? Reach out and ask for help to provide good care. Especially in this time of creativity and, for some, empty hours, you might find more folks than usual who are interested in helping.



10. KNOW WHEN TO TAG OUT

Give yourself a break. You cannot and should not be doing this work alone. Care for yourself! Know when someone has a crisis or emergency, as opposed to when a call or request can wait. Stay charged up so you can charge others. That will be the best for everyone.



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