

February 24, 2021

Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Learning and Action Network News



News:

In partnership with The John A. Hartford Foundation and Cambia Health Foundation, Trust for America's Health is working to identify and disseminate best practices and policy recommendations to ensure that home-bound older adults are prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine. There are over 2.2 million of these individuals in the U.S. who struggle with transportation, access to technology and who may be socially and geographically isolated. As part of this project, TFAH will be holding 30 minute bi-weekly "Huddles" to share what we're learning across the country and provide an opportunity to discuss ideas and challenges related to distributing the vaccine to home-bound older adults. **Starting on March 3rd** the Huddles will occur on Wednesdays at 4:00 pm ET and Fridays 12:30 pm ET.

Thank you to everyone that has shared their thoughts and ideas. **Please continue to share any best practices and policy solutions that are being implemented to ensure vaccine access to this vulnerable population.**

Events and Opportunities:

Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Monthly Trainings

Due to significantly reduced access to programs and services during the COVID-19 pandemic, many older adults have limited opportunities for social engagement. Addressing social isolation has become a high priority in many communities across the country. TFAH's March AFPHS training session will focus on the impact of social isolation on older adults and how communities have pivoted to create social engagement opportunities. In addition, successful and innovative approaches from two departments of health will be presented.

You can register now for this training session and subsequent sessions using the links below.

March 18th – [Public Health's Role in Addressing Social Isolation](#)

April 15th – [Public Health, Housing, and Older Adults](#)

Built Environment Principles – Lead Cross-Sector Collaboration and Infuse Age-Friendliness in Other Priorities – February 25, 2021, 11:00 am, - 12:00 pm ET. This webinar will highlight how built environment professionals can utilize planning and

other collaborative tools. Presenters will discuss how existing efforts can be used to leverage opportunities to regenerate and retrofit built environment assets using a lifelong equity lens. Register [here](#).

Vaccinating the Most Vulnerable: Homeless and Substance Abuse

Populations – February 26, 2021, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm ET. Hosted by the National Minority Quality Forum, this webinar will highlight lessons learned from Richmond, VA and the Daily Planet Health Services related to vaccinating homeless and substance abuse populations. Register [here](#).

Engaging Older Adults During the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond – March 10, 2021, 9:00 am ET. Hosted by the International Federation on Ageing and the World Health Organization Division of Healthier Populations, this webinar will highlight the challenges related to social isolation and promote social engagement strategies to support older adults. Register [here](#).

Prioritizing Equity in Public Health Leadership Summit. This four-part webinar series from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials is designed to inspire public health leaders, partners, and stakeholders to create innovative policy and practice solutions to reduce structural racism and eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities. The summit concludes with a virtual meeting on April 21st.

- Leadership and Policy: Actions to Address Racism as a Public Health Issue –March 5, 2021, 1:00 pm – 2:15 pm ET. Register [here](#).
- Transforming Public Health Through Leadership, Justice, and Racial Healing – March 12, 2021, 1:00 pm – 2:15 pm ET. Register [here](#).
- Institutionalizing Equity: Public Health Leaders Advance Organizational Change - March 19, 2021, 1:00 pm - 2:15 pm ET. Register [here](#).
- Shifting Power Workshop: Collaborations to Confront the Root Causes of Health Inequities - March 26, 2021, 1:00 pm - 2:15 pm ET. Register [here](#).

4th Annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day Symposium – May 6, 2021, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm ET. Hosted by the National Council on Aging, U.S. Administration for Community Living, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, this symposium will include sessions that focus on a diverse array of topics addressing the most pressing older adult mental health needs. Registration is free and will open in March. More information [here](#).

Resources:

COVID-19

Vaccine Brings Hope

[Many older adults are feeling encouraged](#) about being able to engage with their families and resuming social activities again due to the COVID-19 vaccine. After receiving their second dose of the vaccine, older adults are looking forward to some normalcy and being able to leave their homes.

Different Vaccination Priorities Across States

[A Kaiser Family Foundation report](#) notes that states are making different choices about prioritizing people with underlying medical conditions who are at greater risk for contracting COVID-19. The CDC has a list of medical conditions that they recommend states consider to be “high-risk medical conditions.” Although 14 states have prioritized people with medical conditions according to the CDC recommendations, most other states have limited the number of high-risk conditions included on their priority lists, added other conditions from the possible risk factor list, or created their own list altogether.

Food Assistance Programs Decrease Food Insecurity

Food assistance programs implemented by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) during the COVID-19 pandemic [helped decrease food insecurity](#) for low-income Californians. This is a 28% reduction from the pre-pandemic period. It also coincides with enhancements to the state and federal food assistance programs.

Family Caregivers not on Vaccine List

Tens of thousands of middle-aged caregivers are too young to qualify for a vaccine and are not in the priority phases, despite the responsibilities they assume that are the same as paid caregivers in elder care facilities. A [Kaiser Health News article](#) noted that older caregivers, age 65 and older, qualify because of their age. Some states are considering ways to provide vaccines to caregivers that choose to accompany older residents to vaccination sites.

Higher COVID-19 Death in Nursing Homes with More Minorities

In facilities where over 40 percent of the residents are Black or Hispanic, COVID-19 deaths were 3.3 times higher than facilities where the white residents were high highest proportion. [This study](#) by the University of Chicago also notes that minority communities experience the highest rates of COVID-19 infection and nursing homes in these community tend to be of lower quality.

New Report Highlights Well-Being of Older Adults during Public Health Emergencies

The National Foundation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released [Maintaining Physical and Mental Well-Being of Older Adults and Their Caregivers During Public Health Emergencies](#). The report addresses:

- Key needs and concerns of older adults and caregivers during COVID-19
- Assistance needed by older adults and caregivers during COVID-19
- Older adults' and caregivers' information-seeking behaviors and resource preferences
- Public health interventions and strategies focused on social isolation, deferral of medical care, management of chronic conditions, elder abuse and neglect, and deconditioning

In addition to this report, information about [caregiver needs during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and a [handout to help caregivers take care of themselves](#) are also available.

Additional Resources

State Approaches to Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities

States are addressing the root causes of racial and ethnic disparities and advancing health equity with cross-agency collaboration, effective use of data, and improved community input and staff diversity. In addition, they are also leveraging Medicaid managed care to be more effective in reducing disparities. [This chart](#), created by the National Academy for State Health Policy, highlights these efforts by state.

Webinar Highlights the Importance of Social Connectedness

[A recent National Core Indicators – Aging and Disabilities \(NCI-AD\) webinar](#) highlighted the importance of maintaining social connectedness for older adults and adults with disabilities. NCI-AD shared data and how states can use this information to examine mental health and community participation. In addition, a health plan that provides long term services and supports highlighted how they are responding to social isolation.

Considerations for Vaccinating Black Populations

Among the 23 states that collect demographics about vaccine recipients, statistics reveal that white residents are getting vaccinated at higher rates than Black residents. According to a [blog post](#) by Community Catalyst, the root of this disparity can be attributed to medical mistrust, increased occupational exposure, limited culturally competent care, limited vaccination sites in Black neighborhoods, and limited supplemental support.

A Healthy Aging Culture in Public Health

[A recent article in the Journal of Public Health Management](#) authored by the Association for State and Territorial Health Officials highlights the importance of public health agencies using their authority to address disparities among older adults, Black and Latino communities, and American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes. According to the article, public health official and agencies must do the following to develop a culture of healthy aging: 1) enact and advocate for healthy aging policies; 2) integrate aging and public health plans; 3) include aging in public health communications.

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