

A campaign to increase vaccine confidence while reinforcing basic prevention measures



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User Guide for the Rural Communities Toolkit

This material is intended for all organizations that communicate directly with rural audiences.

Content last reviewed: May 20, 2021

Your Role as an Advocate for Rural Residents

As a trusted partner to rural residents, you're in an important position to share crucial COVID-19 information and increase confidence in the COVID-19 vaccines.

You've built a rapport, so community members trust you and understand that you support their well-being.

Because of your connection to the community, you know how to reach and inspire them.

You can educate community members on the COVID-19 vaccines by sharing clear, complete, and accurate messages.

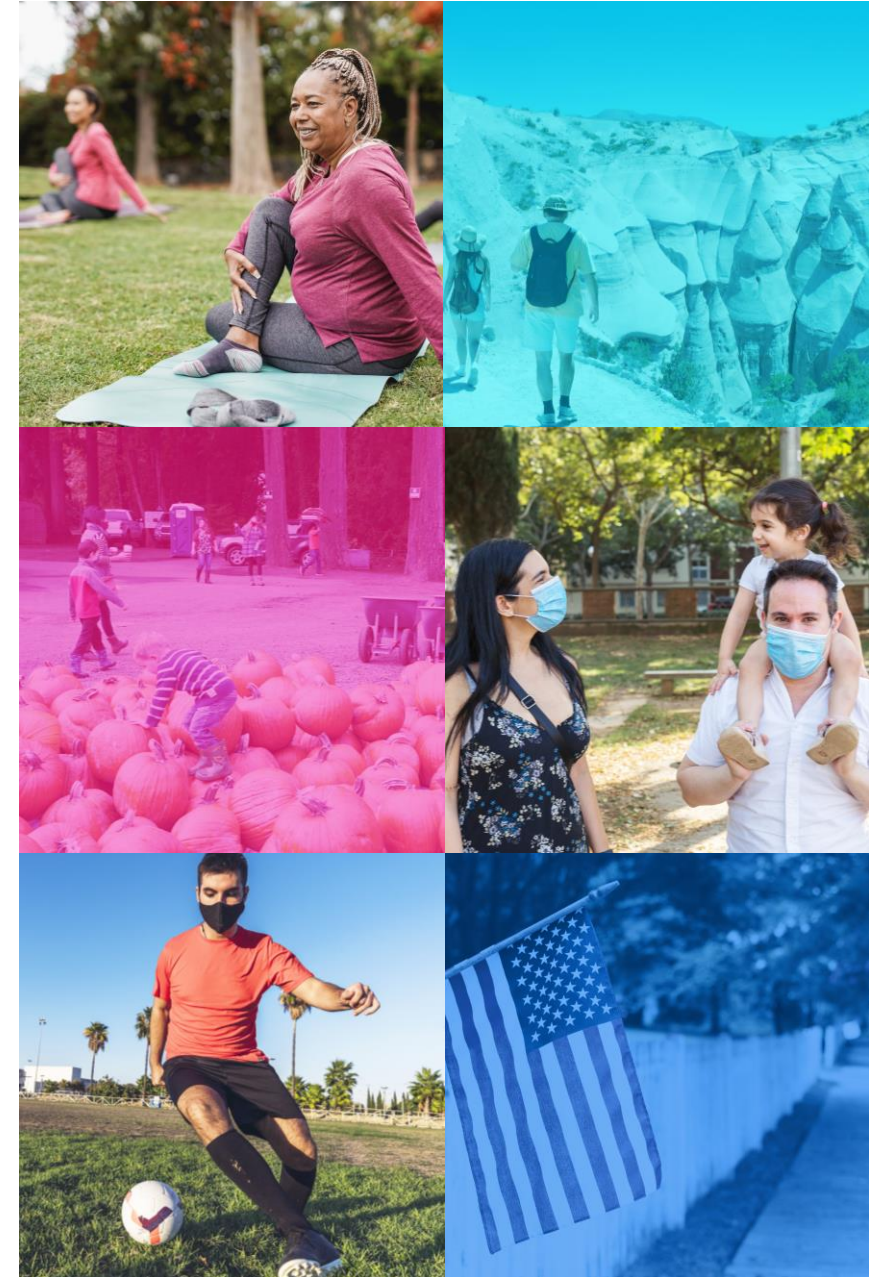


Purpose and Goals

This toolkit features tailored materials you can use to educate rural residents about the COVID-19 vaccines and to increase their confidence in the vaccines while reinforcing basic preventive measures.

This toolkit features newly developed and culturally tailored materials, including fact sheets and an infographic, from the [HHS COVID-19 public education campaign](#).

We'll regularly update this toolkit, so please check back for new materials.



Fact Sheets

These fact sheets will answer some of the most frequently asked questions about the vaccines for rural audiences. They also contain information on ways to meet the basic and health care needs of rural communities during the pandemic.

Suggestions for use:

- Post them on your website.
- Mail them along with your direct mailings.
- Add them to your newsletters.
- Post them at an information center in your organization if you have one.

Ways to Ensure Your Community Gets COVID-19 Vaccines



Ways to Ensure Your Community Gets COVID-19 Vaccines

Rural communities have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people in rural communities are at increased risk for COVID-related severe illness, hospitalization, and death because of chronic health conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. At the same time, many rural communities have limited access to health care, meaning they may also have limited access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccines are an important tool in ending the COVID-19 pandemic. As a rural leader, you can help bridge the COVID-19 vaccine access gap and ensure members of your community get COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they can.

How to Bridge the COVID-19 Vaccine Access Gap

Promote the preventive measures in your community

First and foremost, make sure your community members know about the important ways they can protect themselves and others from getting and spreading COVID-19 and ultimately the pandemic:

- Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can. You have three ways to find vaccines near you:
 - Go to vaccines.gov
 - Text your ZIP code to 438829
 - Call 1-800-232-0233
- Until you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose):
 - Wear a mask over your nose and mouth when inside public places.
 - Stay at least 6 feet (two arm lengths) away from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
 - Avoid being in crowds.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Avoid gatherings in poorly ventilated indoor spaces.

Content last reviewed: May 26, 2021

About the COVID-19 Vaccines



About the COVID-19 Vaccines

What You Can Do as a Rural Leader in Your Community to Share Information About the COVID-19 Vaccines

A trusted community member can effectively deliver messages that motivate people to get a COVID-19 vaccine and engage in other positive health behaviors.

Rural communities are diverse, so you'll need to customize your messaging about the COVID-19 vaccines to account for the local culture of your community.

- Pair the general COVID-19 vaccine information below (Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines) with customized COVID-19 vaccination information for your community. Customized messaging creates trust and acceptance of the general information.
- Ensure local doctors and other providers know they can call CDC's Clinician On-Call Center, a 24-hour hotline for answering COVID-19 questions. Dial 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) and ask for the Clinician On-Call Center.
- Use free materials from CDC's toolkit (available in English and Spanish) to share key facts about the vaccines in newsletters, presentations, or to share or post in community settings.
- Check out the [Rural Health Information Hub](#) for innovative ideas for education and outreach.
- When you come across COVID-19 information, cross-check it with cdc.gov/coronavirus and learn how to respond to misinformation that you encounter.

Key Things to Share About COVID-19 Vaccines

The benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine

COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there's no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you or your loved ones. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others in your community.

COVID-19 vaccination is an important tool to help stop the pandemic. All COVID-19 vaccines that are currently available in the United States prevent nearly 100% of hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. You should get a vaccine as soon as you can.

The different available vaccines

Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are currently available in the United States. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the vaccines only after confirming that they were proven safe and effective in medical studies involving tens of thousands of volunteers like you.

Content last reviewed: May 26, 2021

Meeting the Needs of Rural Communities



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How to Support the Basic and Behavioral Health Needs of Your Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on all our lives. Adults and children alike are stressed and overwhelmed by its challenges. Many of us have felt isolated and lonely because we have been keeping our distance to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Resources are available to help community members with their stress and other personal problems they might be experiencing. As a trusted rural community leader, you can use the following resources to have honest conversations and help the members of your community get the support they need.

Support for people's basic needs

People in your community may be eligible for extra financial help to cover [food](#), [housing](#), [and bills](#).

Several other [resources for individuals and families seeking food assistance](#) are available.

The [locator for websites](#) is a searchable map for finding free food assistance programs near you.

People who rent their homes have certain [rent protections and support](#) available.

Employers and workers should know about relevant [workplace safety issues, wage and hour laws, and unemployment insurance](#).

Eligible veterans, their spouses, and their caregivers [can get a COVID-19 vaccine through VA](#).

Farmers in your community may be eligible for [financial and other help](#).

The Rural Health Information Hub's [Rural Response to Communities Release 2019 \(RCOVID19\)](#) has COVID-19 information specific to rural communities.

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Content last reviewed: April 26, 2021

Infographics

Infographics are a great visual resource for sharing facts and dispelling myths.

Suggestions for use:

- Add them to your newsletters.
- Post them on your website.
- Ask community partners to place the infographics in their facilities.
- Post them at an information center in your organization if you have one.

Protect Your Community and Yourself With a COVID-19 Vaccine

PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY AND YOURSELF WITH A COVID-19 VACCINE



A COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others from infection.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and here now. Strong confidence in the vaccines within communities will lead to more people getting vaccinated, which will lead to fewer COVID-related illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths.



As a rural leader, you can do the following to build COVID-19 vaccine confidence in your community:



Encourage people in your family, organization, and community to be vaccine champions and to share testimonials about why they got vaccinated.



Have discussions about COVID-19 vaccines, so people can share their views and ask questions. Ask local doctors, nurses, or other health care professionals to help answer people's questions.



Share [key messages](#) about vaccine safety through multiple channels that people trust, such as local radio stations, schools, and in faith-based settings.



Help educate people about [COVID-19 vaccines](#), including how they were developed and monitored for safety and how individuals can talk to others about the vaccines.



Learn more about [finding credible vaccine information](#). When you come across COVID-19 information, cross-check it with [cdc.gov/coronavirus](#) and learn how to respond to misinformation that you encounter.



Make your decision to get vaccinated [visible](#) and celebrate it.

You have three ways to find vaccines near you:

- Go to [vaccines.gov](#)
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-800-232-0233

For more information about protecting yourself and others from COVID-19, visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](#).



**Thank you for advocating
for and informing your
rural community!**





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Ways to Ensure Your Community Gets COVID-19 Vaccines

Rural communities have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people in rural communities are at [increased risk for COVID-related severe illness, hospitalization, and death](#) because of chronic health conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. At the same time, many rural communities have limited access to health care, meaning they may also have limited access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccines are an important tool in ending the COVID-19 pandemic. As a rural leader, you can help bridge the COVID-19 vaccine access gap and ensure members of your community get COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they can.

How to Bridge the COVID-19 Vaccine Access Gap

Promote the preventive measures in your community

First and foremost, make sure your community members know about the [important ways](#) they can protect themselves and others from getting and spreading COVID-19 and ultimately end the pandemic:

- Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can. You have three ways to find vaccines near you:
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- Until you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose):
 - Wear a mask over your nose and mouth when inside public places.
 - Stay at least 6 feet (two arm lengths) away from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
 - Avoid being in crowds.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
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- Wash your hands often.

Another way to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is to avoid unnecessary travel. Check out CDC's [Road Travel Toolkit for Transportation Partners](#), which provides travel guidance, road trip planning guides, road sign messaging, and other resources you can promote in your community.

Ensure local doctors and other providers know they can call CDC's Clinician On-Call Center, a 24-hour hotline for answering COVID-19 questions. Dial 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) and ask for the Clinician On-Call Center.

Warn your community about who is at increased risk for severe illness

People at [higher risk for severe COVID-19](#) include:

- Older adults
- Pregnant people
- People with [certain medical conditions](#)

Encourage people who meet these criteria to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they can. Remind people in your community that the vaccines are free and available to everyone age 12 and older in the United States, regardless of your immigration status and whether you have health insurance.

Each state has (and even each vaccination site may have) different identification and proof of eligibility requirements to get vaccinated. Remind people before they go to their vaccination appointment to confirm what identification and proof of eligibility they may need to bring with them.

Know who to turn to for trustworthy information

COVID-19 testing, vaccines, and other health information can be hard for people in rural communities to find. People in your community can find out where to get a vaccine near you at [vaccines.gov](#)

Other trusted sources of information include local primary care providers and pharmacists. Also identify the state, local, or tribal [health department](#) in your area. Share the contact information for these facilities with your community members so they know:

- How to get tested for COVID-19.
- When and where to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Consult with your local health department to get regular updates about COVID-19 cases in your area and the availability of vaccines. Share this information with community leaders and the public.

It can be helpful to develop informational cards to hand out to members of your community that list key COVID-19 health information, such as important contact information, websites, and vaccination sites.

Form a coalition to widely share information in your community

Work with different community partners to get their creative ideas on ways to protect the community and get their help to reach everyone in the community with information about COVID-19 vaccination efforts, prevention and testing information, and other resources. Partners may include:

- Health departments
- [State offices of rural health](#)
- [State rural health associations](#)
- Businesses
- Pharmacists
- Employers
- Nutritionists
- Faith-based organizations
- Community health workers
- Advocacy organizations
- Educators
- Counselors

Promote safety guidance for specific groups

Work with your local health care providers to share trustworthy safety guidance from your local health department, the state, and CDC for employers, educators, health care professionals, parents, and other groups. [CDC's regularly updated guidance](#) covers many topics, including how to safely operate your business during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can find guidance specific to your community through your [local health department](#).

Advocate for a vaccination center in your community

Planning to host a federally supported vaccination center begins with the [Community Vaccination Centers Playbook](#). This playbook includes guidance for allocating federal support to state, tribal, and territorial community vaccination centers. First steps include working with partners to identify resources and meeting Federal Emergency Management Agency requirements.

For more information

For the latest information, including communication resources, go to the [CDC website](#).

CDC has created several COVID-19 communication resources for the public. Rural community leaders can use these [communication resources](#) (including videos), when appropriate. These materials are also available in [Spanish](#) and [other language translations](#).

More innovative ideas for education, outreach, and some treatment plans can be found on the [Rural Health Information Hub](#).

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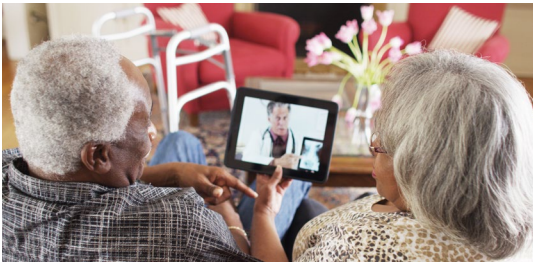
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The different available vaccines

[Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are currently available](#) in the United States. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the vaccines only after confirming that they were proven safe and effective in medical studies involving tens of thousands of volunteers like you.

Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine only requires one shot. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines require two shots to get the most protection.

The cost of the vaccines

The federal government is providing the vaccines free of charge to everyone in the United States. It's free to everyone even if you don't have health insurance. And it's free regardless of immigration status.

Safety of the vaccines

Every COVID-19 vaccine authorized for use in the United States is [safe](#). Tens of millions of people nationwide have safely received a COVID-19 vaccine, and these vaccines continue to undergo extensive safety monitoring.

For people who are pregnant, nursing, or would like to have a baby. People who are pregnant are at increased risk for a bad case of COVID-19. That's why CDC says that if you're pregnant, you may choose to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or would like to become pregnant someday.

For people who've already had COVID-19. Experts don't yet know how long you're protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. It's possible—although rare—that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again. Getting vaccinated is a safer way to build protection than getting infected.

Effectiveness of the vaccines on new forms of the virus. New forms, or variants, of the virus that causes COVID-

SAFETY IS THE TOP PRIORITY

The FDA and CDC have the highest standards when it comes to ensuring the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Their process includes the following procedures:

- ✓ Scientists must first test vaccines extensively in medical studies to ensure they are safe and effective.
- ✓ Before the FDA authorizes a vaccine for use among the public, it ensures its safety by independently:
 - Reviewing the data from the medical studies, and
 - Inspecting the manufacturing facilities.
- ✓ Even after a vaccine has been authorized, the FDA and CDC closely monitor vaccine administration to identify even rare side effects or reactions.
- ✓ The FDA and CDC closely review any reports of side effects or reactions and share these facts with the public.

The extremely rare cases of blood clotting following Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine—just a small number of cases out of millions of vaccinations—show that the FDA and CDC's vaccine safety monitoring systems work and catch even the rarest of reactions.

A thorough investigation has confirmed that Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine is safe and effective.

And doctors have been notified and trained to understand the signs to watch for and the proper course of treatment if blood clots occur.



19 have emerged. Current data suggest that the COVID-19 vaccines used in the United States should work against these variants.

Side effects from the vaccines

People who've been vaccinated commonly report [side effects](#)—these are normal signs that your body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.

These side effects are mild and typically short-lived, lasting at most a few days. The most common side effect is a sore arm at the injection site. Other side effects include fever, chills, feeling tired, headache, muscle pain, and joint pain.

A small number of people reported a severe allergic reaction called anaphylaxis after vaccination. This is extremely rare (two to five people for every million people vaccinated), and vaccine providers know how to effectively treat this type of reaction.

Even with side effects, the COVID-19 vaccines pose much smaller risks to your health than the virus.

Vaccine safety reporting systems

The FDA and CDC are using both established and new safety monitoring systems to closely monitor the COVID-19 vaccines and make sure they're safe.

If you experience a reaction to one of the COVID-19 vaccines, report it to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#). You can also report your reaction through [v-safe](#), a smartphone tool that allows you to quickly tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting a vaccine.

Availability of the vaccines

Vaccines are here now and everyone age 12 and older in the United States can get them. You have three ways to find vaccines near you:

- Go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-800-232-0233

Vaccination is one of several tools for ending the pandemic

Until you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose), you should keep using all the tools available to protect yourself and others:

- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth when you're inside public places.
- Stay 6 feet (2 arm lengths) apart from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water aren't available.

These preventive measures are important because scientists are still learning how well and for how long the vaccines prevent you from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

Vaccine Information in Your Community

Check out your [state and local health department websites](#) for the latest information about vaccination and the COVID-19 cases in your area and share this information with the community you serve.

VACCINE DEVELOPMENT IN FOCUS

Normally, vaccine development takes so long because of limited resources and funding.

Because of the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic, scientists received a lot of money to fund their research into developing and testing vaccines.

Manufacturers also received a lot of money to start producing vaccines in large quantities while scientists tested their safety and effectiveness in tens of thousands of volunteers.

No one cut any corners or skipped any steps in the COVID-19 vaccine development, testing, and authorization process. They simply overlapped some of the steps instead of doing them one after the other. All the while, the FDA, CDC, and independent medical experts have been monitoring the safety of the vaccines and continue to do so.

Also, the scientists who worked on the vaccines didn't start from scratch. Scientists have been studying vaccines for over 100 years. The technology used for the mRNA vaccines had been studied for two decades. And the National Institutes of Health had already been working on a prototype coronavirus vaccine.





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- People who rent their homes have certain [legal protections and support](#) available.
- Employers and workers should know about relevant [workplace safety issues, wage and hour laws, and unemployment insurance](#).
- Eligible veterans, their spouses, and their caregivers [can get a COVID-19 vaccine through VA](#).
- Farmers in your community may be eligible for [financial and other help](#).
- The Rural Health Information Hub's [Rural Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) has COVID-19 information specific to rural communities.

Support for people's behavioral health needs

For everyone

- [How Right Now](#) is an online tool to help people cope with feelings of grief, loss, and worry during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [People Seeking Treatment](#) lists free and confidential resources to help individuals connect with local, skilled, and trained counselors.

- [Coping With a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#) has information for individuals on how to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. It also has information for government, faith-based, and community leaders on how to support their communities.
- [Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) poster has brief tips for a general audience on healthy ways to deal with stress.
- [Young Adults: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) poster has brief tips for young adults on healthy ways to deal with stress.
- [COVID-19 Behavioral Health Resources](#) is a collection of resources organized by topic and target audience.

For individuals at risk for self-harm and suicide

During times of extreme stress, people may have thoughts of harming themselves and suicide. Suicide is preventable and help is available.

- [#BeThere to Help Prevent Suicide](#) has information about the risk of suicide, signs to watch for, and how to respond if community members notice these signs in themselves, their friends, or their loved ones.
- **Community members in crisis can get immediate help:**
 - Call 911
 - [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or [Lifeline Chat](#)
 - [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
 - [National Child Abuse Hotline](#): 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
 - [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#): 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or [Online Hotline](#)
 - [Veterans Crisis Line](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [Crisis Chat](#) or text: 8388255
 - [Disaster Distress Helpline](#): CALL or TEXT 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish).
 - [Eldercare Locator](#): 1-800-677-1116 – [TTY Instructions](#)
 - [National Helpline](#) for mental and substance use disorders: 1-800-662-4357

For families and children

- [Helping Children Cope](#) has tips for parents about behavior changes to watch for in their children and ways to support their children through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Helping Children Cope With Emergencies](#) has tips for parents on how to help their children cope with natural and human-caused disasters.
- [Coping After a Disaster](#) is a Ready Wrigley activity book for parents to use with their young children to help them cope after a disaster. It and other activity books are available in English and Spanish on the [CDC website](#).
- [Teen Depression](#) has information about the signs and symptoms of depression and how to get help for depression.

- [Parents: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for parents on healthy ways to deal with stress.
- [Family Caregivers: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for family caregivers on healthy ways to deal with stress.
- [Students: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for family caregivers on healthy ways to deal with stress.

For people at higher risk for serious illness

- Ariadne Labs' Serious Illness Care Program developed a [COVID-19 Response Toolkit](#) to help support effective patient–provider communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Older Adults: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for older adults on healthy ways to deal with stress.

For health care workers and first responders

- [Healthcare Personnel and First Responders: How to Cope with Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) has information on how to recognize the symptoms of stress and how to cope.
- [Emergency Responders: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself](#) has suggestions for how to prepare for disaster responses and how to cope with the related stress.
- The [First Responders and Disaster Responders Resource Portal](#) has stress management tips and links to relevant online trainings, webcasts, and other resources.
- [First Responders: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for first responders on healthy ways to deal with stress.
- [Clinicians: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for clinicians on healthy ways to deal with stress.

For other workers

- [Employees: How to Cope with Job Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) has information on how to recognize the symptoms of stress and how to cope.
- [Working Adults: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for working adults on healthy ways to deal with stress.
- [#FarmStateOfMind](#) has resources for farmworkers and their families to help with managing stress, anxiety, and depression.
- [Critical Workers: Care for Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for critical workers on healthy ways to deal with stress.
- [Teachers: Encourage Your Students to Care for Themselves One Small Way Each Day](#) is a poster with brief tips for students on healthy ways to deal with stress.