



Faith in the Vaccine:

A National Playbook for Religious Communities
Engaged in COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach & Education



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Part 1

The Big Idea: Faith & COVID-19 Vaccination

The Big Idea



Moving from the creation of COVID-19 vaccines to broad scale vaccination is an enormous project within the U.S. and around the world.



Religious institutions, leaders, communities, traditions, and values are a tremendous asset and partner in breaking down barriers to vaccination.



Research shows that faith based interventions are particularly powerful to influence thinking about the vaccines, especially for those with concerns about the vaccine. Our responsibility to support vaccination is a justice and equity issue.



The Purpose Of This Playbook:

This playbook is designed to equip individuals across the nation to activate the strengths of religiously diverse communities for intentional, respectful vaccine education & outreach.



The content is guided by a fundamental belief in:

- The importance of religiously diverse institutions and leaders to act on critical issues
- The power of science and the vaccines to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and save lives
- The importance of equitable vaccine distribution where no community is left behind.



The Challenge: Barriers To Vaccination

Public polling shows that diverse perspectives on the vaccine are changing regularly as the vaccine roll-out progresses. Barriers to vaccination include:



Access to Vaccines

- Vaccines have not been equally available to all communities.
- The distribution process is highly complex, relying on technology access and competency, which affects some communities more than others.
- Language, transportation, and ability to accommodate available appointment times can also limit vaccine access.



Vaccine Hesitancy

- Vaccine hesitancy is a constellation of motivations, insecurities, reasonable fears, and less reasonable conspiracy theories.
- There are a multitude of **reasons** why people may have concerns about the vaccine from lack of concern about COVID-19, to historical mistrust of the medical establishment, to concerns about the safety of the vaccine, to political partisanship.

Understanding the authentic motivators for why your and other communities may need to build trust in the vaccine is an essential first step in vaccine outreach.



Part 2

Talking About Vaccination With Your Community

Creating Space For Conversation

Voicing Your Values

Many Americans trust their religious and ethical leaders and look to you for guidance. Religious leaders and community members can serve as role models and conversation partners, showing support for vaccination.



- Give sermons and talks on the importance of community health and vaccination.
 - Get inspired by [Rev. Kevin Murrial](#), [Rev. Terris King](#), [these evangelical pastors](#), and [other religiously diverse leaders](#).
- Share pictures of yourself or community members getting vaccinated on social media.
 - Use the hashtag [#FaithVax](#) to connect to a national conversation.
- Engage community members in open, non-judgmental conversations grounded in your tradition on their thoughts about the vaccine.



- Host town halls to discuss concerns or challenges that community members may be experiencing with the vaccine.
 - This [IFYC guide](#) provides a simple roadmap to host such a conversation.
- Leverage social media to encourage discussion about vaccine concerns and answer community questions.
 - [The American Muslim Health Professionals](#) or the [Friendly Neighborhood Epidemiologist](#) are great examples.
- Engage in conversations at the denominational, regional, or national networking spaces to encourage regional and national faith leaders to engage in similar vaccine outreach activities.

Learning The Messages

Want to learn more about this?
Check out IFYC's [online tools](#)

Start With Listening

Conversations about the vaccine must start with deep listening. Even our best intentions can backfire when we're trying to persuade with fact-based arguments.



Research shows that typical efforts to change someone's mind actually makes them more committed to their initial attitudes. Rather than make decisions based on rational argument, most people rely on instinct and preconceived notions to come to their viewpoints.

An effective vaccine conversation seeks to understand and affirm that you understand a person's perspective first, before asking what might open them to think differently.

Effective Messages

Once we've done our job with good listening, there are many effective messages that seem to persuade people to think differently about the vaccine. Consider what you've learned about your conversation partner in discussion as you consider a theme to emphasize:

Reminder that the vaccine is the path to return to normal: Most people want a way to end the pandemic and return to life as we know it. Vaccines are the most effective path "back to normal."

Protecting elders/others/families: Vaccines are an important way to protect the people and communities. Accepting a vaccine is about protecting those things."

For some communities, an emphasis on protecting **culture**, which requires in person gathering, may be particularly effective.

Embodying religious values: Vaccines are a meaningful way to live out religious values around care for community. The next section of this playbook provides references to national leaders & institutions for more to draw on in this area.

For some communities, a reminder that vaccination is ultimately a pro-life value is a key religious theme. Vaccinating our communities is an essential way to save lives and protect our families.

Always emphasize that at the end of the day, vaccination is a personal choice. People should feel empowered to make a decision based on their values, not shamed or coerced into something they don't want to do.

Check Out These Tools For Engaging With Specific Communities About The Vaccine:



- **Christians & the Vaccine:** A set of responses to frequently asked questions from evangelical questions, including both written and video resources: [here](#)
- **The Conversation:** Video resources, including engagement from Black scientists, doctors, and nurses for talking about the vaccine in Black communities: [here](#)
- **Skinner Leadership Institute:** Vaccination toolkit for the Black faith community: [here](#)



Religious Resources For Your Message

Religious Literacy & Religious Messages

Speaking from within religious traditions both values and theologies are an essential tool to conversations about vaccines.



- Religiously diverse traditions consistently speak to the value of the common good, promoting health, and caring for others. Learn more about theologies of public health and caring for others [here](#).
- National religious organizations and leaders have made their support for vaccines clear. Review public statements from national religious leaders in support of the vaccine [here](#).



Frequently Asked Questions About The Vaccine

Medically accurate information about the vaccines is only one tool in the vaccine education effort. You can find strong, accurate information about the vaccines in a variety of places, including from the [CDC](#) and your state Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Health and Human Services has provided answers to a set of frequently asked questions which is also available [here](#).

However, questions which are specific to particular religious communities are not engaged as fully in these national resources.



Frequent Questions From Believers

Fetal Cell Tissue Use In Vaccines¹

- Questions have been raised about the use of fetal cells in the making of several of the COVID-19 vaccines. This raises concerns for many religious believers, including some Catholic and Muslims, given deep care for the lives of the unborn.
- Doctors and the vaccine makers have clarified that fetal tissues were not used in the making or testing of the vaccines. Some vaccines have, however, used fetal cell line cells that grow in a laboratory, descended from elective abortions in the 1970s and 1980s. These individual cells have multiplied into many new cells over time and are used regularly for research purposes.
- The Catholic Church has stated that it is morally acceptable to receive vaccines developed with the use of fetal line cells.
- Some Muslim religious authorities have also expressed support for these vaccines.
- Read a Catholic and a Muslim perspective on these vaccines.

Pork Products In Vaccines²

- Many religious believers often wonder if vaccines contain any porcine products, given some religious prohibitions about pork consumption.
- While other vaccines have occasionally contained porcine products, none of the COVID-19 vaccines available in the U.S. do. Multiple reputable sources have confirmed that these vaccines are halal and kosher.

References:

- 1: https://www.health.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/COVID%20Vaccine%20Page/COVID-19_Vaccine_Fetal_Cell_Handout.pdf
- 2: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-faq/vaccination/>



Part 3

Talking About Vaccination With Your Community

Hosting A Vaccine Clinic



- The first step in hosting a vaccination clinic in your religious community is identifying local health and government partners that can support your work. [This guide](#) can help you lay the groundwork for a successful vaccination event.
- Once you have secured these essential local partners, you can turn to the logistics of the day. [This guide](#) will walk you through the essential elements of a vaccination event, including a run of show for the day.
- Be sure to work closely with your partners to identify what you will need to coordinate vs. what your partners will lead.



Thank you to our partners at [Oak Street Health](#) for these valuable tools!

Supporting Your Community in Vaccination

Hosting a vaccine clinic isn't the right step for every religious community, but there are still many ways to advance vaccine outreach within your religious or faith-inspired communities.

Here are just a few ideas on how to engage this essential work leveraging the strengths of your community:

- **Help secure appointments:** Navigating the online infrastructure to get an appointment is still a challenge. Some communities are organizing volunteers into "vaccine access committees," using volunteer time & energy to help secure vaccine appointments for folks who need support.
- **Coordinate rides to appointments/vaccination events:** Volunteers can also play an important role getting people to their appointments.
- **Meal Preparation:** Religious communities are organizing meal delivery to individuals who may be dealing with side effects after receiving the vaccine.
- **Childcare Support:** Religious communities are also organizing childcare support to manage vaccine appointments or to support individuals dealing with side effects after receiving the vaccine.

Going Deeper: IFYC is compiling a set of tools and curricula to support leaders across the country in these important efforts. Explore [these tools](#) here to equip yourself for leadership.



Part 4

Stories Of Impact

Voices: Faith In The Vaccine Leaders

IFYC is running a **Faith in the Vaccine program** which mobilizes faith-inspired young leaders across the country to engage in vaccine outreach. Here are some of their stories. Click their image to read them.

Dominique Grate & Kevin Singer share their thoughts on vaccination in the Evangelical community.



Elaine Krebs shares a Catholic Take on Vaccinations



Lauren Bohorquez discusses her moral responsibility to vaccinate her Hispanic community.



Part 5

Tools & Training

Tools & Training

IFYC has developed a suite of curricula and resources to support religious leaders and communities in vaccine outreach efforts. Check out all of our resources [here](#), or take a closer look at each of our offerings:



- **Understanding Vaccine Outreach:** IFYC has an [online module](#) describing challenges to vaccine outreach and [a conversation](#) with Rush University medical faculty to understand some common questions around the vaccine.
- **Interfaith Organizing:** There are a wide variety of tools exploring the use of interfaith leadership skills in vaccine outreach. Sessions explore the [importance of listening](#), [interfaith literacy](#), [public narrative](#), [community organizing](#), and [asset mapping](#).
- **Digital Communications:** [Learn more](#) about the importance of digital communications in vaccine outreach from our partners at Lightful.



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