



TALKING POINTS FOR CITY LEADERS

Last modified: March 18, 2021

We have designed this document to help guide your communication around the COVID-19 vaccine. The following four key messages and supplementary talking points may be used flexibly: as a source of themes for longer written pieces, as short explanations in interviews, or as prompts to help frame community conversations. Each “Key Message” has several supporting “Talking Points” that range in detail and complexity. Some talking points include sub-points that allow you to “Dive Deeper” into supporting research and information for your audience. There is also a brief Q&A portion of this document for you to utilize. We encourage you to assess your audience before deciding which talking points to share with them.

KEY MESSAGE: Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine is Safe.

TALKING POINTS:

- To date, nearly 2.5 million Georgians have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and over 900,000 have become fully vaccinated. Exactly zero of these 2.5 million Georgians have died from the vaccine. Conversely, the COVID-19 virus has claimed the lives of more than 17,000 Georgia residents.
- I understand that historic mistreatment of communities of color can make you hesitant—even skeptical—of the COVID-19 vaccine. I see how these horrible incidents along with the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on communities of color over the past year can bring you little hope, but today’s vaccine process is safe and effective. You can trust this process.
- The COVID-19 vaccine has been proven to be so safe—and effective—that three different vaccines have received FDA emergency use authorization to date, and the US is currently administering 2.3 million shots a day as of mid-March.
- While it’s true that the COVID-19 vaccines were rolled out faster than other vaccines, each approved vaccine went through the same rigorous testing as other non-COVID vaccines and medicines. In the US, this process has produced safe and effective vaccines for the flu, polio, measles, mumps, pertussis and more. The technology behind the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines—mRNA—has been in development for [nearly 30 years](#) and has saved millions of people from getting sick and dying.
- Many pharmaceutical companies invested significant resources into quickly developing a vaccine for COVID-19 because of the world-wide impact of the pandemic. The emergency situation warranted an emergency response, but that does not mean that companies bypassed safety protocols or did not perform adequate testing.



It's Worth a Shot



- The vaccine does not contain traces of the coronavirus. It only triggers an immune response in your body, helping you defeat the virus. The vaccine has zero impact on your DNA, and it does not contain a microchip of any kind nor any other harmful substances.
- COVID-19 vaccines were tested in large clinical trials to make sure they meet safety standards. Many people were recruited to participate in these trials to see how the vaccines offer protection to people of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions.
 - **Dive Deeper:** The National Medical Association COVID-19 Task Force on Vaccines and Therapeutics reviewed the clinical trial data in search of differences in health outcomes that would place the Black community at higher risk of unfavorable outcomes from the vaccine and determined the following: Ten percent of people who enrolled in both the Pfizer and Moderna clinical trials were Black, equaling more than 4,400 and 3,000 people, respectively. Both the percentage and number of Black people enrolled are sufficient to have confidence in health outcomes of the clinical trials. The percentage is also close to the proportion of the US population that is Black, 13.4%. Persons receiving the vaccine were > 94% less likely to develop COVID-19 infection as compared to the placebo group. Efficacy and safety were observed and consistent across age, gender, race, ethnicity and adults over 65 years of age.

You can also share personal stories and experiences: Have someone take a picture of you getting your COVID-19 vaccine and share this with your residents who may be hesitant. If you are comfortable sharing pictures of your family receiving a vaccine as well, this can be a powerful visual to help increase confidence in immunizations.

KEY MESSAGE: Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine is the Next Step Toward Normalcy.

Talking Points:

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has already determined that fully vaccinated individuals can congregate indoors with other fully vaccinated people without masks after a two-week period. In addition, fully vaccinated individuals can gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household without masks under certain conditions. (View CDC Guidance [here](#)).
- The livelihoods of so many Georgia workers and business owners rely on the ability for all of us to gather in groups again, and the only way to achieve this is by widespread vaccine adoption.
- If you have been unable to hug—or even see—a loved one during the last year, getting the vaccine can put you one step closer to seeing them.



It's Worth a Shot



- Getting vaccinated means going to your local diner or coffee shop again, going to concerts and festivals again, going to live sporting events again, going to neighborhood barbecues again, going to entertainment venues again, and, most importantly, hugging your parents, grandparents, and children again.
- If much of Georgia's vaccine allotment continues to go unused, we will be unable to achieve herd immunity. This will merely prolong our collective personal and economic suffering.

KEY MESSAGE: By Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine You are Doing Your Part to Protect Us All!

Talking Points:

- It is our duty to do what's best for ourselves, our loved ones, and our community.
- Scientists are continuing to study variants and monitor concerns that as the virus mutates, vaccine efficacy could be reduced. As the virus continues to spread and evolve in the U.S., the most important thing we can do to stop the spread is to continue to get more people vaccinated and practice protocols of wearing face coverings and social distancing. Early research does show that the available vaccines are effective in some capacity against the more contagious variants, including those originating in the U.K. and South Africa.
- Our community is suffering from the pandemic, and the only way to protect our future and return to a sense of normalcy is to ensure we all get vaccinated.
- It is important that we encourage our friends and family to do the same, and that we help them get vaccinated when it is their turn. This assistance may include providing rides to vaccination sites or appointment scheduling assistance.
- This isn't just about you and getting your life back to normal, it is about our family, friends, neighbors and community. Do it for yourself and do it for them!
- Georgia ranks last in U.S. the percentage of vaccines that have been administered in relation to the number of doses we have received (less than 65%). Let's do our part to move up in the ranks and protect our communities!
- There is no federal or state mandate that requires an individual to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. It is wholly incumbent on you to do the right thing to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your community.



KEY MESSAGE: Our Health, Community & Economy are at Stake by Not Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine in Pursuit of Reaching Herd Immunity.

Talking Points:

- Our current vaccination rate and pace is preventing us from fully opening our economy, and spending time with our friends and family. Georgia cannot afford another lost summer and year.
- Getting vaccinated means getting back to familiar activities: Happy hours with friends, shopping at local businesses and going on vacations. This kind of spending invests back into the economy that has been stalled for the past year.
- More vaccines will lead to fewer COVID-19 cases and less community spread. That will allow for further loosening of restrictions on indoor business capacity and gathering sizes. More people in the restaurant and hospitality industries will be able to safely return to work.
- Getting the vaccine will help workers who collect an hourly wage by preventing them from getting sick and being unable to work. For these workers, losing hours means losing income.
- Some businesses have remained closed or limited their operations during the pandemic despite being allowed to legally reopen out of concern for employee and customer health. Knowing many of those employees and customers have been immunized will give those business owners the confidence to reopen.
- The chance of recovering faster for the small business owners and hard workers in our community will be more difficult if we do not do our part to stop the spread of the coronavirus by getting vaccinated.
- If we don't start vaccinating more individuals, we risk being left behind when our nation's economic recovery takes off. That means more job losses, more business closures and more evictions. Small business owners in our community are especially vulnerable, as many do not have the financial cushion of major corporations. This also means bad news for our economy, as summer visitors will choose other states for their travels that have lower COVID numbers and higher vaccination rates.



Q&A: COVID-19 Vaccine Questions

Q: Can a COVID-19 vaccine make me sick with COVID-19?

No. None of the authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines or COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19. [Read more.](#)

Q: After getting a COVID-19 vaccine, will I test positive for COVID-19 on a viral test?

No. Neither the recently authorized and recommended vaccines nor the other COVID-19 vaccines currently being administered or in clinical trials in the US can cause you to test positive on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection.

Q: How bad are the vaccine's side-effects?

Many people suffer no side effects. But some experience short-term mild or moderate vaccine reactions that resolve without complication or injury. Reactions primarily include pain at the site of injection, headache, chills, fatigue or muscle pain or fever lasting for a day or two. Keep in mind that these side effects are indicators that your immune system is responding to the vaccine and are common when receiving vaccines.

While vaccine side effects can impact shot-takers, they are short-lived and far less painful than extended sick time, a hospital stay, or death. A day with a headache or fever from a vaccine is easier than months of recovery time from COVID-19.

Q: If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19, the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, and with new variants that are more contagious, you should take the vaccine regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. CDC is providing recommendations to federal, state, and local governments about who should be vaccinated first.

Q: When am I eligible for the vaccine?

The Georgia Department of Public Health website has posted its vaccine rollout plan at www.dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-vaccine-rollout-plan. Currently, all Georgians over 55 are eligible, as well as people with high-risk medical conditions and who work in fields including healthcare and law enforcement.

Q: Where can I sign up to get my vaccine?

The Georgia Department of Health has created a Georgia Mass Vaccination Site Registration at www.dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine. As that state awaits additional vaccine supply from the Federal Government, DPH is urging currently eligible Georgians to pre-register today for one of the available mass vaccination sites in our state.