



**JB Pritzker, Governor**  
**Paula A. Basta, M.Div., Director**

*Respect for Yesterday*  
*Support for Today*  
*Plan for Tomorrow*

January 14, 2021

Dear Aging Network:

Imagine the day when we all can stop wearing a mask, or when older Illinoisans can gather indoors at their favorite restaurant again with their grandchildren, friends, and family for a celebratory meal. That day is coming - but only if we all do what needs to be done today to keep ourselves, our families, our communities, and our state healthy and safe.

There is good reason to be hopeful; the long-awaited arrival of a safe and effective vaccine to prevent COVID-19 is coming at last! With the authorization of the vaccines in December, we are reaching a turning point in this pandemic. As we enter this new phase, the Illinois Department on Aging is committed to garnering trust in the COVID-19 vaccine, ensuring safety and equity in the vaccine distribution process, and restoring the livelihoods of our older Illinoisans as we work to recover from COVID-19. The time is now for all of us to be All In for Illinois!



The COVID-19 vaccine is coming! You may need to receive two doses of the vaccine; please check with your healthcare provider or local health department. The vaccine will be available at no cost.

#### WHY SHOULD I TAKE THE VACCINE?

Older adults have a higher risk for severe illness and hospitalization if they get COVID-19. Research has demonstrated that the vaccine is 95% effective in preventing COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine will help keep you, your family, and your community healthy and safe.

#### IS THE VACCINE SAFE?

We understand that some people may be concerned about getting vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccine was tested with thousands of participants to generate scientific data and other information in order to determine its safety and to get approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

#### SIDE EFFECTS

Short-term side effects are mild and may include fever, fatigue, muscle and joint pain, chills and sore arms. They will go away in a few days, but they are normal and a sign your body is working to build up protection against the virus.

**MYTH VS FACT**

**MYTH:** If I get vaccinated for COVID-19 I'll be more vulnerable to other illnesses.

**FACT:** While the COVID-19 vaccine will work to teach your immune system to recognize and protect against coronavirus, it is not proven to make you vulnerable to other illnesses.

**MYTH:** After I get the vaccine, I no longer have to wear a mask.

**FACT:** While health experts learn more about the protection of COVID-19 vaccines, it will be important for everyone to continue to wear a mask, wash hands often, and practice social distancing.

Contact your local health department to ask about COVID-19 vaccination in your area:  
<http://www.idph.state.il.us/LHDMAP/HealthRegions.aspx>

Illinois Department of Public Health COVID-19 vaccine site:  
<http://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccine-faq>

For general questions about COVID-19 and Illinois' response and guidance,  
call 1-800-889-3931 or email [DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV](mailto:DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV).

**Click here to access the above flyer and distribute. The flyer will soon be available in multiple languages.**

It has been a long road, but throughout this pandemic, the Aging Network has always stepped up. Now that the vaccine is becoming available, our work must shift as we enter a new phase in protecting our older Illinoisans. The unfortunate statistic remains that **over 88% of the COVID-19** deaths in the State of Illinois have been adults 60 years of age or older. It is imperative that we all make sure that our older Illinoisans understand that they continue to be at risk without the vaccine. As leaders in the Aging Network, we need to be an example for our older Illinoisans, family members, friends, and the community to follow. Getting the word out that the vaccine is safe to our older diverse community will be a difficult task, but at least we can now see a glimmer of light at the end of the long dark tunnel.

This is a rapidly evolving process, but we are committed to keeping you informed of the latest information related to vaccination in Illinois, and encourage you to check [IDoA's COVID-19 Vaccine webpage](#) which has up-to-date information, videos, and helpful links meant to dispel myths and rumors about the vaccine and promote vaccine distribution. Please feel free to share the graphic on the left as well as the information found on our page with our older Illinoisans. We also encourage you to check the [IDPH COVID-19 Vaccine website](#) regularly for the most up to date information and guidance.

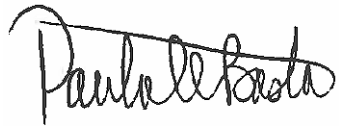
As we begin to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine, there's no doubt scammers are already scheming, leaving our older Illinoisans as unsuspecting prey. I ask for your help in making

sure our older adults know that Medicare covers the COVID-19 vaccine, so there will be no cost to them. If you come across a COVID-19 vaccine scam, or hear that one of our older adults has been a victim, immediately report it to the [Attorney General's Consumer Fraud](#) Hotline at (800) 386-5438, the [Federal Trade Commission](#), or call (800) MEDICARE. Additionally, some common misconceptions are:

- You can't pay to put your name on a list to get the vaccine.
- You can't pay to get early access to a vaccine.
- You can't pay to receive doses of the vaccine in the mail.

Fighting the pandemic brought our Aging Network closer than ever. Perhaps like your teams, we shared moments filled with tears, laughter, fear, relief, sadness, and frustration. It has been the greatest challenge of our lifetimes, and I am appreciative to be traveling this path with all of you while under the bold and compassionate leadership of Governor Pritzker. Let's remain vigilant in our compliance with face coverings, social distancing, and limits to in-person gatherings as we **support today and plan for tomorrow**. Please continue to stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,



Paula Basta, M.Div.  
Director, Illinois Department on Aging

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The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the **Senior HelpLine at (800) 252-8966; (888) 206-1327 (TTY)**

