



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

Respect for Yesterday
Support for Today
Plan for Tomorrow

**Find A Vaccine
Location**

IDoA COVID-19 Resources

February 12, 2021

Dear Aging Network:

February is [Black History Month](#), which is a time to celebrate the achievements of African Americans and honor the significant role and impact they have made on all facets of life and society throughout U.S. and Illinois history. We also must acknowledge the health inequalities in our society and recognize our need to do better at seeing and respecting our shared humanity - dismantling a system that privileges some over others. Governor Pritzker's mission has always been to promote and instill a culture of equity and respect for all people, and the Aging Network must do its part to address the disparate impact of COVID-19 on African Americans and other communities of color.

To help assist in these efforts, I am proud to report that our Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are receiving a \$1.2 million grant to provide direct assistance and support to older adults with the vaccination registration process. This grant will enable the AAAs to increase their outreach and education on the vaccine to our most vulnerable older adults, including our minority populations. Additionally, our Care Coordination Units (CCUs) continue to directly outreach to Community Care Program participants and determine their need for assistance with the vaccination registration process. Emergency Senior Service funding is available to all our CCUs for the provision of assistance, which includes transportation needs. Please contact your IDoA program coordinator for more information. Furthermore, we continue to update [IDoA's COVID-19 Vaccine webpage](#), and we encourage you to check out the information, videos, and helpful links meant to dispel myths and rumors about the vaccine and promote vaccine distribution.

Each of us can do more to cultivate a diverse, inclusive, and loving world. Remembering, reaffirming, and being inspired are simply not enough; we must challenge ourselves to live out the messages of Dr. King - those of love, and the need to advance equity and racial justice. In that vein, I would like to highlight the Illinois Department of Human Rights' annual [Black History Month event](#), being held at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, February 16. I invite you to tune in to watch IDPH's Dr. Ngozi Ezike, U.S. Congresswoman Robin Kelly, and State Representative Sonya Harper as they discuss the COVID-19 vaccine and legal protections from discrimination in the delivery of healthcare and more. Additionally, if you didn't get a chance to watch IDoA's Panel Discussion on COVID-19 challenges facing older adults in ethnic and minority communities last week, you can [view it at any time here](#).

We are reaching a turning point in this pandemic, and there is reason to be hopeful. However, there is an incredible amount of work that still needs to be done as [over 89% of the COVID-19](#) deaths in the State of Illinois have been adults 60 years of age or older. We must all make sure that our older Illinoisans understand that they continue to be at risk without the vaccine. Education, outreach, and ensuring equitable access to receiving the vaccine is key for our older diverse community. We, as an Aging Network, must commit to doing all that we can to assist our human services community in accessing the vaccine.

From the bottom of my heart, I appreciate your ongoing dedication and support during these life changing times. In closing, I hope that all of you have a Happy Valentine's Day, and remember this classic poem, slightly modified: **Roses are Red, Violets are Blue, We**

love our older Illinoisans, and know you do too! Please continue to stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,



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

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)**

