

# Vaccine Outreach and Counseling Program (VOCP)

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# What is the VOCP?

- Many people have questions and concerns about COVID-19 vaccines and want to speak to a health care provider about getting vaccinated. This conversation takes time and effort.
- The NYC Health Department has partnered with some Medicaid and Medicare Advantage health plans to compensate providers to:
  - Proactively reach out to eligible patients in their panel who are not vaccinated
  - Counsel them about the importance of vaccination, and
  - Help arrange vaccination.

# What is the VOCP?

- A program to reimburse practices for proactive outreach to unvaccinated individuals to counsel them on vaccination.
  - \$50 if the counseling is done by a clinician (includes at least 3 minutes of clinician time)
  - \$25 if the counseling is done by a non-clinician using a script approved by the billing provider
- Once all necessary steps have been completed, providers can bill for a Complete Counseling Session.
- Health plans will have various start dates in September and will run until the end of October 2021

# How is it different from the Commissioner's Advisory?

- Whereas the Advisory is for people that the doctor/practice “has in front of them” (physically or via tele-health), the VOCP is for the practice to do proactive outreach to people **not** in front of them, with the explicit purpose of counsel for vaccination.
  - This is important because the VOCP program cannot replace, nor be provided in conjunction with, Medicaid/Medicare billable services
- Whereas the Advisory is for any patient, the VOCP is exclusively for the people that the provider receives from each participating health plan's Unvaccinated Patient List.
  - This is very important, because the program reimburses for one counseling session for each patient.

# What will be reimbursed?

For the encounter to be billable, all the following steps must be completed:

- ✓ Step 1: Confirm Patient Eligibility
- ✓ Step 2: Deliver a Complete Counseling session
- ✓ Step 3: Complete Documentation

# Step 1: Confirm Eligibility

- ✓ Review the Unvaccinated Patient List provided by each participating health plan
  - ✗ People not on the list are not eligible for a billable Complete Counseling Session
- ✓ Reach out to eligible patients on the Unvaccinated Patient List
  - ✗ There needs to be outreach. If the patient is already at a patient visit, they are not eligible.
- ✓ Confirm with the patient that they are unvaccinated
  - ✓ Confirm that they have not received any dose of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or are not fully vaccinated with a vaccine authorized for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO)
  - ✓ For this outreach effort, you should accept a patient's statement that they have been vaccinated and you should not proceed to provide a Complete Counseling Session.
  - ✗ Vaccinated patients are not eligible for a billable Complete Counseling Session

# Step 2: The Complete Counseling session

If the patient confirms being unvaccinated, the provider or designee can proceed to deliver a Complete Counseling Session. This is a minimum three-minute oral conversation with the patient, during which the provider or designee must do all of the following:

- ✓ Make a strong recommendation for COVID-19 vaccination (unless medically contraindicated, in which case the counseling session is not billable).
- ✓ Counsel the patient on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines consistent with NYC Health Department guidance and respond to questions they may have
- ✓ Arrange for vaccination:
  - If the patient agrees to vaccination, assist the patient in booking a vaccine appointment in the provider's office, at another location, or at home.
  - If the patient does not agree to vaccination, offer information on how they can obtain a vaccine at a later time.

# Step 3: Documentation

For each Complete Counseling Session, the provider or designee must document the following in the patient's medical record:

- Name of provider or designee who performed the Complete Counseling Session
- How the counseling session was performed
- Content of the counseling session that shows the conversation included information on vaccine safety and effectiveness
- Content of the counseling session that shows the patient was provided with information on how and where to get vaccinated and that interested patients were offered assistance arranging vaccination

# VOCP Provider Toolkit

1. Go to [nyc.gov/health](https://nyc.gov/health)
2. Click on “COVID”
3. Click on “Information for Providers”
4. Click on “Vaccines”

The screenshot shows a navigation menu on the left with categories: Symptoms and Care, Prevention and Groups at Higher Risk, Vaccine, Testing, Pregnancy, Mental Health and Substance Use, Data, Information for Providers, and Reopening Businesses and Schools. The 'Vaccines' category is highlighted. The main content area is titled 'Vaccine Information for Providers' and includes a sub-section 'New from the Health Department' with a list of advisories. A red box highlights the 'COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach and Counseling Program Toolkit' advisory.

[General](#) **[Vaccines](#)** [Talking with Patients](#) [Facilities Guidance](#)

## Vaccine Information for Providers

### New from the Health Department

- [Health Advisory #33: New Compensation Program for Vaccination Counseling and Commissioner's Advisory to Offer COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#) (PDF, September 9) announces a new program that offers compensation for proactive vaccination counseling, and a Commissioner's Advisory for health care providers to use every opportunity to offer COVID-19 vaccine information.
  - [COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach and Counseling Program Toolkit](#) (PDF, September 9) provides an overview of the compensation program for eligible health care providers, provides sample language to initiate vaccination conversations with unvaccinated patients, and answers frequently asked questions about the program.
    - As of September 9, plans participating in the payment program are: HealthFirst, MetroPlus Health, Empire BCBC/HealthPlus and Amida Care. We expect additional plans to join the program. Check back for updates.
  - [Commissioner's Advisory for Health Care Providers to Offer Unvaccinated Patients Information on COVID-19 Vaccination at Each Patient Visit](#) (PDF, September 9) strongly urges health care providers to always offer their unvaccinated patients information on the efficacy, availability and administration of COVID-19 vaccination at every patient visit. Patients who agree to vaccination should be offered the vaccine or referred to a vaccination site.
    - [FAQ on Commissioner's Advisory](#) (PDF, September 9)



# COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach and Counseling Program Toolkit

## September 1 to October 31, 2021\*

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Over 20  
FAQs

# Sample Script available to providers

The provider who was assigned the Unvaccinated Patient List by the health plan must approve the script used by their non-clinical team members in performing a Vaccination Outreach and Counseling session. The following sample scripts are available in the provider toolkit:

- Voicemail Script (does not constitute a billable Complete Counseling Session)
- Call script
  - Vaccine Information
  - Vaccine Scheduling
    - On-site appointment, home appointment, off-site appointment
    - Options for patients who do not want to schedule an appointment or are not ready to commit to being vaccinated
  - Closing

# **Commissioner's Advisory Directs Health Care Providers To Offer COVID-19 Vaccine Information and a New Program Offers Compensation for Proactive Counseling**

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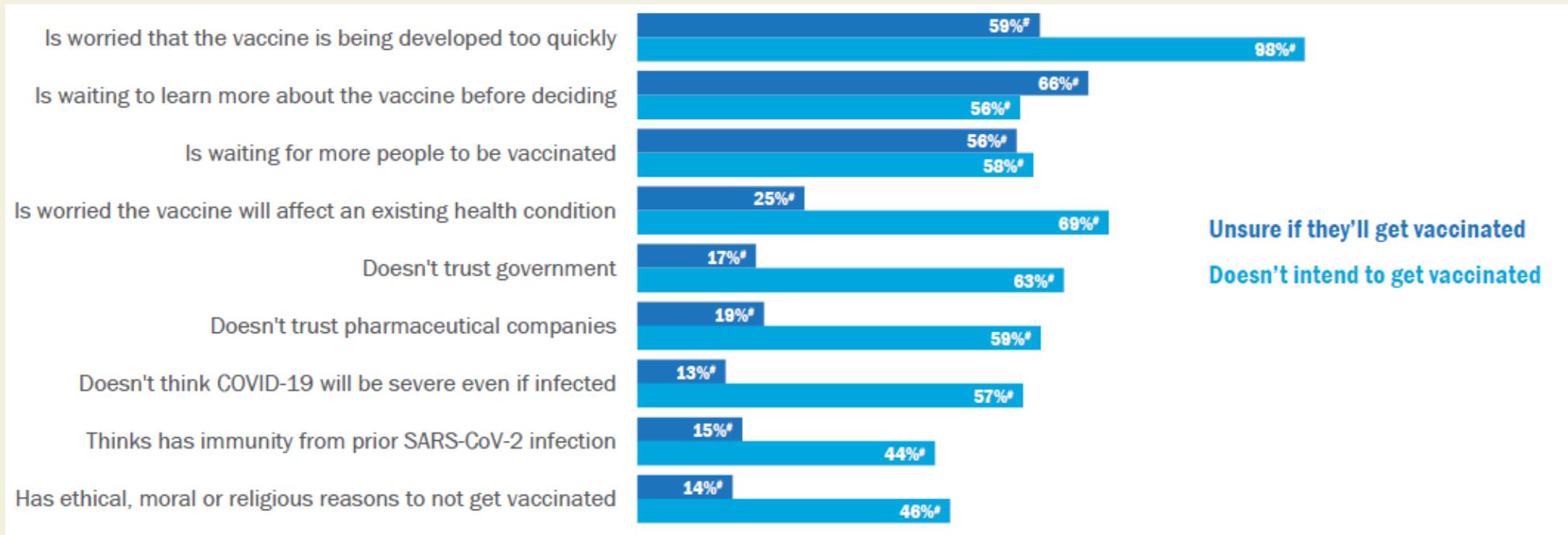
# Provider Recommendations Matter

- Providers are one of the most trusted sources of COVID-19 vaccine information.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Provider recommendations are one of the strongest predictors of vaccination.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation Daily Global Health Policy Report. Information And Communications Technology Revolution In The Developing World. <https://www.kff.org/news-summary/information-and-communications-technology-revolution-in-the-developing-world/>. Published September 2, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> See “References” slides.

- Common reasons for low vaccine confidence included concerns about the speed of vaccine development, wanting to learn more and waiting for more people to get vaccinated.
- The reasons below were given by people who said they did not know or were unsure whether they would get a COVID-19 vaccine (n=61) and people who said they will not get vaccinated (n=32).



\* Significantly different from reference group

# Estimate is potentially unreliable and should be interpreted with caution

^ Data suppressed

Source: NYC Health Opinion Poll (June 14-29, 2021)

# Commissioner's Advisory: Making Sure New Yorkers Get Vaccine Information

- Providers informing and encouraging their patients to get vaccinated against COVID-19 is critical to ending the pandemic. Therefore, the Commissioner of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) has issued an advisory.
- A Commissioner's Advisory, effective Thursday, September 9, 2021, strongly urges providers serving patients in NYC to offer information on the efficacy, availability and administration of COVID-19 vaccination during every patient visit.

# What Is Advised?

- For all unvaccinated patients during every patient visit, providers should give them the following information on the COVID-19 vaccines:
  - ✓ Efficacy
  - ✓ Availability
  - ✓ Administration
- If a patient agrees to get vaccinated, providers should offer the vaccine or refer the patient somewhere to get the vaccine.
- Providers should document all of their efforts to comply with the Commissioner's Advisory in the patient's medical record.

# Who Does the Commissioner's Advisory Apply To?

- The Commissioner's Advisory applies to providers who:
  - Serve patients ages 12 and over
  - Work in inpatient hospitals, emergency departments, outpatient clinics and primary care offices
  - Are licensed as physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners or midwives

# How Can Providers Follow the Recommendations in the Commissioner's Advisory?

- Non-provider staff can act as the provider's designee
- By offering verbal and/or written information
- Through in person visits and telehealth visits
  - If a patient continues to not get vaccinated, providers should continue to provide them with vaccine information.
  - If the patient is being treated as an inpatient and has multiple treating providers, only the primary provider needs to follow the recommendations.

# Are There Any Exceptions to the Commissioner's Advisory?

- The following exceptions apply:
  - ✓ When the patient is being treated for a life-threatening emergency
  - ✓ When the patient is comatose or determined by the attending provider to lack the mental capacity to consent
  - ✓ When the patient is a minor (younger than age 18)
    - For minors eligible for the vaccine, vaccine information and an offer or referral to get vaccinated should be provided to the parent or guardian.
  - ✓ When the patient has a medical contraindication to all of the available COVID-19 vaccines consistent with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention clinical considerations.

# Provider Validations

- **Dr. Machelles Allen**, Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer of NYC Health + Hospitals
- **Dr. Toyin Ajayi**, Chief Health Officer of CityBlock
- **Dr. Antonia Eyssallenne**, Medical Director at CityBlock
- **Julius Johnson**, President of the Greater NYC Black Nurses Association
- **Dr. Judy Salerno**, President of the New York Academy of Medicine
- **Dr. Rachel Villanueva**, President of the National Medical Association
- **Dr. Ramon Tallaj**, Chairman of the Board of SOMOS Community Care
- **Dr. Joseph Conte**, Executive Director of the Staten Island Performing Provider System
- **Dr. Sal Volpe**, Chief Medical Officer of the Staten Island Performing Provider System

# Next Steps

- Learn more by visiting <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-providers-vaccines.page>.

# Thank you!

A question-and-answer session will now begin.

# Resources

- References showing that patients list providers as one of their most trusted sources of COVID-19 vaccine information:
  - [COVID Collaborative Coronavirus Vaccine Hesitancy in Black and Latinx Communities](#): A survey of 1,050 Black adults and 258 Latino adults.
  - [Kaiser Family Foundation January 2021 Public Opinion Survey](#)
  - NYC Health Department December 2020 and March 2021 Health Opinion Polls (unpublished)

# References

References showing provider recommendations are one of the strongest predictors of vaccination (not specific to COVID-19):

- [Impact of Provider Recommendation on Tdap Vaccination of Adolescents Aged 13-17 Years \(PubMed\)](#)
- [Predictors of Provider Recommendation for HPV Vaccine Among Young Adult Men and Women: Findings From a Cross-Sectional Survey \(PubMed\)](#)
- [Provider Endorsement: The Strongest Cue in Prompting High-Risk Adults to Receive Influenza and Pneumococcal Immunizations \(PubMed\)](#)
- [Predictors of influenza Vaccination in the U.S. Among Children 9-13 Years of Age \(PubMed\)](#)

# References

References showing provider recommendations are one of the strongest predictors of vaccination (not specific to COVID-19):

- [Understanding Barriers and Predictors of Maternal Immunization: Identifying Gaps Through an Exploratory Literature Review \(PubMed\)](#)
- [Antenatal Vaccine Uptake: A Cross-Sectional Study Investigating Factors Influencing Women's Choices in Pregnancy \(PubMed\)](#)
- [Predictors of Human Papillomavirus Vaccination Among Young Men Who Have Sex With Men \(PubMed\)](#)
- NYC Health Department-led focus group from May 2015 (unpublished) on Tdap vaccination among pregnant women. The focus group found the most trusted source of information is one's provider, especially if the provider gives the patient a recommendation and not just information.

# Resources

References showing providers usually do not give recommendations for adolescent and adult vaccines (even if they offer the vaccine):

- [Provider Recommendation for HPV Vaccination Across Hispanic/Latinx Subgroups in the United States \(PubMed\)](#)
- [Correlates of HPV Vaccine Initiation and Provider Recommendation Among Male Adolescents, 2014 NIS-Teen \(PubMed\)](#)
- [Human Papillomavirus Vaccination Among Diverse College Students in the State of Georgia: Who Receives Recommendation, Who Initiates and What Are the Reasons? \(PubMed\)](#)