



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc
Commissioner

2021 Health Advisory #3

Collect and Report Race and Ethnicity Data to Help Ensure Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines

- **High-quality data on vaccine recipients' race and ethnicity are needed to monitor COVID-19 vaccine access and uptake in New York City.**
- **Providing accurate and complete data in the Citywide Immunization Registry will help enable equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.**

February 2, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene strongly encourages providers to collect and report COVID-19 vaccine recipients' race and ethnicity to the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR). Currently, this information is unknown for 40% of vaccine recipients; complete and accurate race and ethnicity information is urgently needed to support equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in NYC.

Instruct staff on how to document race and ethnicity in medical records. If your practice uses data from an electronic health record to complete CIR reports, make sure race and ethnicity are separately recorded in patient records so that accurate information can be transmitted to the CIR. If you have not yet begun providing COVID-19 vaccines but plan to do so, start preparing now by reviewing how your practice collects and records patient race and ethnicity.

Complete and accurate reporting of race and ethnicity data are essential to tracking equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. These data can then be used to inform vaccine distribution and outreach. Please consider:

- Every vaccination is an opportunity to battle racism.
 - Complete race and ethnicity data are essential to determining which groups need additional support to get vaccinated.
- COVID-19 has laid bare enormous racial and ethnic inequities driven by historic and ongoing structural racism across society, most notably in jobs, housing, and healthcare.
- All clinical and other patient-facing staff should encourage vaccine recipients to provide race and ethnicity information.
- Providers are strongly encouraged to:
 - Ensure that all staff, especially those who conduct patient intake or administer vaccinations, understand the importance of these data, why they are being requested, and how they are used.

- Instruct staff to explain to patients why these data are requested and how they are used. For example, state: "As part of our efforts to make sure we are doing our best to meet the health needs of our patients, we ask all patients about their race, ethnicity and ancestry."
- Ask recipients to report their own race and ethnicity. Never assume someone's race or ethnicity based on appearance, languages spoken, or other observations. Recognize that ancestry and heritage fields may not be standard in electronic health records, and that you may need to adjust your questions accordingly.
- Reassure vaccine recipients that immigration status is not requested.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Sincerely,



Torian Easterling, MD, MPH
First Deputy Commissioner and Chief Equity Officer



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