



Communicating With Black and African American Patients to Promote Vaccine Adherence

You may hear concerns related to vaccines from your patients. Patient-centered care for immunizations involves empowering individuals to make informed decisions. At AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina (ACNC), we are driven to create opportunities for equitable access for every individual. State data shows that **Black and African American children have disparities with timely vaccinations**. Here are some strategies you can implement in your daily practice to help us support a healthy future for our North Carolinian children.


AmeriHealth Caritas
North Carolina

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Key facts

- Vaccine hesitancy is a growing challenge for immunization programs globally.
- “According to data from the National Immunization Survey, approximately 20% of parents in North Carolina are vaccine hesitant,”¹ and there are disparities in the Black and African American population.
- “Children who are under-immunized, defined as those who have received some vaccines but have not completed all of the recommended doses, are more likely to be Black and come from a low socio-economic background than fully immunized children.”²
- “DTaP vaccine status was also significant in predicting RV vaccine completion status.”²

“Children lacking a complete course of DTaP vaccination are seven times more likely to not receive the RV vaccine.”²

Black and African American children are more likely to have incomplete courses of DTaP, so it is imperative to prioritize immunizations and review vaccination history.

- Statistically, Black and African American patients do not receive strong recommendations and specific offers of the flu vaccine from their health care provider in their health care visit.
- Black and African American families are more likely to experience mistrust of the health care system. Often, this is due to the health care system’s historical unethical use of immunizations in marginalized communities.³
 - Black and African Americans are more likely to report “poor experience” with health systems, which may influence their trust in why your practice is recommending vaccinations.⁴

Lack of transportation, convenient access to health care, internet access and knowledge about how to get vaccinated, as well as



indifference to vaccinations, contribute to disparities, especially in Black and African American populations.⁵

- Many individuals are not educated on the severity of disease that vaccines seek to prevent. Vaccination “indifference” may also play a role in timely vaccines.⁵



Steps to promote vaccination acceptance and adherence

Practice transformation.

- ☐ Review data from your practice stratified by race, ethnicity and language to see if there are any disparities.
 - This will help you determine if there are any disparities and develop an action plan to address them.
 - Pay particular attention to whether there is lagging or incompleteness of vaccinations with DTPaP as a key lagging indicator for your Black and African American patients.
- ☐ During scheduling or patient reminders, inform the patient/family on what to expect during the visit, including any vaccinations, and notate any concerns to discuss during the visit. If the patient needs a flu vaccination, please remind them and assist them in setting up appointments.⁶
 - This will allow you and your staff to be prepared to address any individualized concerns.
 - Ask if they need any transportation assistance. If so, advise them to contact Member Services at 1-855-375-8811 (TTY 1-866-209-6421).
- ☐ Help the patient stay consistent with scheduling by using EHR reminder systems, flexible scheduling and planning assistance before a visit.
- ☐ Create a culture of immunization promotion within your practice by posting messages about immunizations and similar topics from care providers in the office. Post similar messages on social media.⁷
- ☐ Take advantage of every opportunity to vaccinate and communicate the importance of immunizations.

During the visit

- ☐ **Review vaccination completeness** with the family or guardian, and explain what vaccinations are required during the visit and the rationale.
 - For Black and African American patients, review the DTaP and flu history and be proactive in discussing lagging vaccinations.
 - “One emerging strategy, known as **bypassing**, focuses on presenting relevant facts rather than directly debunking misinformation. For example, instead of stating that ‘aluminum in vaccines causes bone problems’ is false, bypassing highlights that ‘the aluminum in vaccines enhances their effectiveness in preventing disease.’”⁸
 - Make strong recommendations, and provide supporting scientific statements and anecdotes to motivate patients.⁶
 - Communicate how immunizations benefit their child, as opposed to using terms like “required” or “state recommended.” For example, use statements like, “These vaccines keep your child healthy and protect them from serious diseases.” Take time to answer questions. Use plain language and terms parents understand.
- ☐ **Foster open conversations:** Seek to understand parents’ concerns and provide requested information.
 - Recognize the environment of mistrust, both historically and contemporarily. Use personal language to connect with the patient and treat their concerns as valid.
 - “[S]imply emphasizing vaccines’ safety and effectiveness may not be enough as it fails to address public concerns and skepticism...the phrase ‘safe and effective’ should be replaced with a more nuanced, empathetic approach that explains vaccine benefits in relatable terms, acknowledges uncertainties, and engages with people in ways that resonate with their real-world experiences and values.”³
 - Use empathic communication and respond to any misinformation and concerns.
- ☐ **Provide a recommended “action plan”** if there is concern about adverse effects, re-emphasizing the benefits as opposed to the risk of vaccination and what to do if they think their child is experiencing an illness.



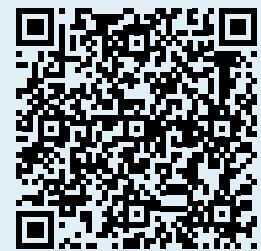
Additional tools

Increasing Immunization Confidence Free Module

<https://bodyswaps.co/library/healthcare/increasing-immunization-confidence>

Vaccine Confidence Toolkit

<https://www.immunizationmanagers.org/resources-toolkits/vaccine-confidence-toolkit/>



Was this useful?

We hope you have found this document helpful and informative. We welcome your feedback. Please consider completing a brief survey by [clicking the link](#) or scanning the QR code to let us know how we can improve our materials.

Sources

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Additional sources

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