

Health Information Compliance Alert

Enforcement News: COVID Vaccine Equity Is Front and Center

A consortium of Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies are working together to ensure disabled and elderly patients have ready access to the COVID-19 vaccine with legal resources and new funding.

Details: During the pandemic, health equity has become an important topic of discussion and policymaking - and the feds are trying to address specific vaccine issues with new guidance and provider assistance.

In a group effort, the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR), HHS Administration for Community Living (ACL), and the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) "have published several new resources to help states, vaccination providers, and others leading COVID-19 response activities improve access to vaccines for people with disabilities and older adults," an OCR release says.



Why? These vulnerable populations don't always have the easiest route to the COVID vaccines, and these HHS agencies aim to make access more equitable since older and disabled Americans "may face additional barriers due to race, ethnicity, income, language, or other factors," said **Alison Barkoff**, ACL acting administrator in an HHS release.

Additionally, the elderly may have a tougher time leaving their homes, and the materials offer providers, states, and communities helpful tips to assist their older patients and "better target their outreach and in-home vaccination efforts," explains **Rebecca Haffajee**, ASPE acting assistant secretary in a release.

Legal: The HHS partners also offer legal resources that clarify the myriad of laws that address disabled individuals' equal access to funded services and help providers "ensure compliance with their obligations," maintains **Robinsue Frohboese**, acting OCR director in a release.

Bonus: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the ACL have partnered together to boost vaccinations in older communities with \$100 million in funding for transportation, appointment scheduling, IT, and more.

Find state and community resource, including legal, technological, and funding updates, at [New Legal Guidance and Resources to Ensure -- and Expand -- Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for People with Disabilities and Older Adults | HHS.gov](#).