

# Join a Community Conversation with the African Community in Worcester about the COVID-19 Vaccines

*What questions do YOU have?*

Sunday, February 7, 2021

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Join ZOOM Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4095419641?pwd=ci9vTG1KVU5yV1ZramkzenVKWGHlZz09>

Meeting ID: 409 541 9641

Password: LAOWC

Local health experts share facts about the COVID-19 vaccines and answer questions to help us make informed decisions.



Olga Valdman, MD  
Assistant Professor  
Family Medicine  
Family Health Center of Worcester  
UMass Medical School  
Board Member, ACE



Benjamin U. Nwosu, Sr., MD, FAAP  
Professor of Pediatrics  
Pediatric Endocrinology  
UMass Medical School



Rebecca N. Kasenge, DO  
Assistant Professor  
Internal Medicine  
UMass Medical School  
Sutton Internal Medicine



George M. Abraham, MD, MPH, FACP, FIDSA  
Chief, Department of Medicine  
Saint Vincent Hospital  
Professor of Medicine  
UMass Medical School



Matilde Castiel, MD  
Commissioner of Health and Human Services  
City of Worcester  
Associate Professor  
UMass Medical School

Sponsored by:

ACE (African Community Education)

Liberian Association of Worcester County

MOAD (Massachusetts Organization of African Descendants)

Community Health Awareness Network-CHAN

UMass Medical School

City of Worcester

Email your questions to: [worcestercovid19survey@umassmed.edu](mailto:worcestercovid19survey@umassmed.edu)

# Community Conversation about COVID 19 Vaccines

- **Introductions**
- **Answering questions about the vaccines that were asked before today**
- **Vaccine schedule & places in Worcester**
- **Answering questions from the chat**  
Please type questions into the chat at any time

# COVID-19 vaccination is a safer way to build protection

- Getting the virus that causes COVID-19 may offer some natural protection, known as an antibody or immune. But experts don't know how long this protection lasts.
- The risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity.
- COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by building immunity without the risk of severe illness.



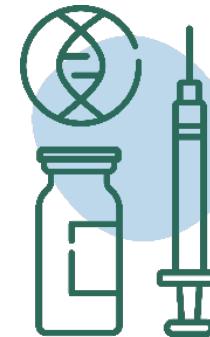
# Key facts about COVID-19 vaccination



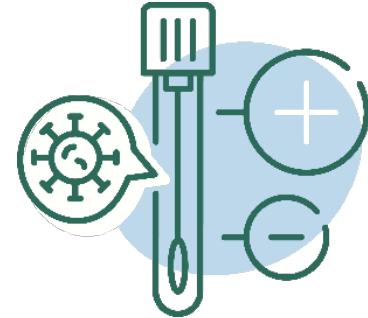
Getting vaccinated can help prevent getting sick with COVID-19



People who have already gotten sick with COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated



COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID-19



COVID-19 vaccines will not cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests\*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/vaccine-myths.html>

\*<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html>

# What vaccines are available?

- Two vaccines have received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the federal Food and Drug Administration from companies named Pfizer and Moderna.
- The Pfizer vaccine requires two doses to be given 21 days apart.
- The Moderna vaccine requires two doses to be given 28 days apart.
- Both vaccines are 95% effective at protecting people from getting sick from COVID-19.
- These vaccines were not studied for use as a single dose. People should get both doses to be fully vaccinated in order to be effective.

# How do we know if the vaccine is safe?

- Vaccines go through more testing than any other pharmaceuticals.
  - First, small groups of people receive the trial vaccine.
  - Next, vaccine is given to specific groups of people (for example, people of a certain age, race, and physical health).
  - Then, vaccine is given to tens of thousands of people and tested for effectiveness and safety.

# How do we know if the vaccine is safe?

- After that, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#) looks at the data to see whether the vaccine works and is safe. They give advice to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- The FDA looks at the data and the advice from the Advisory Committee and decides whether to approve the vaccine.
- The vaccine is only approved after **all of these steps** are done, and the experts are sure that it works and is safe.

# How long after getting the COVID-19 vaccine does it take to be effective? How long does it last?

- It usually takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination.
- That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.
- We do not know yet how long the COVID-19 vaccines will provide protection from getting sick even if you do get COVID-19.
- Experts continue to conduct more studies about whether the vaccines also keep people from spreading COVID-19.

# Should someone who is pregnant or breastfeeding get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Right now we don't have information about whether the COVID-19 vaccines are safe in people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- We do know that getting sick with COVID-19 during pregnancy can increase the risk of severe illness and might increase the risk of outcomes like preterm birth.
- Getting vaccinated is a personal choice for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding. A discussion with your healthcare provider might help you make an informed decision.

# I would like to have a baby one day. Is it safe for me to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Yes. People who are trying to become pregnant now or who plan to try in the future may receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them.
- Based on what we know right now, experts believe that COVID-19 vaccines are safe for someone who is trying to become pregnant in the short or long term.
- In fact, there is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of ANY vaccine.

# Should someone who has a health condition get the COVID-19 vaccine? (i.e., hypertension, diabetes, sickle cell disease, cancer)

Yes!

- It is safe for people with health conditions.
- It is important that people with health conditions get the vaccine.
- Research shows they are more likely to develop severe disease if they develop COVID-19.
- Talk with your provider about your concerns before getting the vaccine.

# Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe for children?

- The Pfizer vaccine is authorized for people ages 16 and older.
- The Moderna vaccine is authorized for people ages 18 and older.
- Younger children and adolescents should not receive COVID-19 vaccination right now.

# Do the COVID-19 vaccines have any side effects?

- Serious side effects from vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine, are rare.
- It is possible that some people may have side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection.
- These side effects may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days.
- The most common side effects are minor and include:
  - Tiredness
  - Headache
  - Pain at the injection site
  - Muscle and/or joint pain
  - Chills
  - Nausea and/or vomiting
  - Fever

# Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received two doses of the vaccine?

- Yes. Experts continue to learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions.
- Until then it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help stop this pandemic, like:
  - Covering your mouth and nose with a mask
  - Washing hands often
  - Staying at least 6 feet away from others.



**Wash your hands**



**Wear a mask**



**Keep your distance**



**Avoid groups**

# COVID-19 Vaccine



## MYTHS vs. FACTS



**MYTH:** The COVID-19 vaccine will give me COVID-19.

**FACT:** The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain the virus itself. It relies on a harmless segment of the virus to spur the production of antibodies.

**MYTH:** We can't trust COVID-19 vaccines because they were rushed and not properly tested.

**FACT:** Researchers have been working on this vaccine technology for over 30 years. The COVID-19 vaccine has been rigorously tested and approved safe and effective by the FDA.

**MYTH:** I already had COVID-19 so I won't benefit from the vaccine.

**FACT:** People who've had COVID-19 do develop protective antibodies, but these will not last especially if you had a mild case. Best way to protect yourself is by getting the vaccine.

**MYTH:** Once I take the vaccine, my life can go back to normal.

**FACT:** It takes several weeks after your second shot of the vaccine to develop antibodies that protect you against the virus.

**MYTH:** Since the COVID-19 survival rate is so high, I don't need to get the vaccine.

**FACT:** Although most people who get COVID-19 are able to recover, many develop severe complications. So far, more than 1.7 million people around the world have died from COVID-19.

**MYTH:** Now that we have the vaccines, the pandemic will be over very soon.

**FACT:** In order to achieve what's called herd immunity – the point at which the disease is no longer likely to spread – about 70% of the population will need to have been vaccinated or infected.

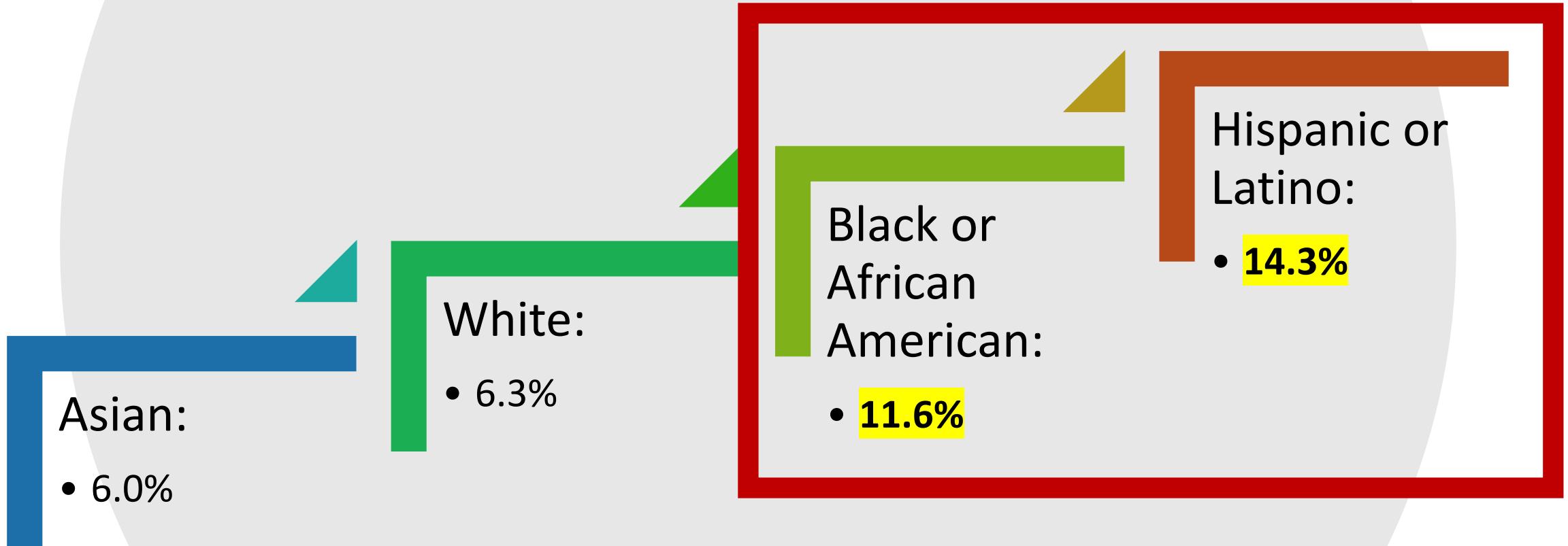


Commonwealth  
Medicine

# Will a COVID-19 vaccine change my DNA?

- **No.** COVID-19 mRNA vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.
- Messenger RNA vaccines—also called mRNA vaccines—are the first COVID-19 vaccines approved in the United States. They teach our immune system how to fight against a specific virus.
- In order to do its job, the mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine doesn't need to go inside the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. This means the mRNA never interacts with our DNA in any way and has no way to change it.

# 9.5% of the City's total population has had COVID-19



## **COVID-19 Vaccination in MA: Phase 1 & 2 Eligibility Status**

### **Phase 1**

All phase 1 priority groups

Now eligible

### **Phase 2**

1 Individuals age 75+

Now eligible

2 Individuals 65+ and individuals with 2+ certain medical conditions

Not yet eligible

3 Early education and K-12 workers, transit, grocery, utility, food and agriculture, sanitation, public works, and public health workers

Not yet eligible

4 Individuals with 1 certain medical condition

Not yet eligible

When can I  
get the  
vaccine?

# Phase 1: (ALL ACTIVATED)

**Step 1:** Clinical and non-clinical health care workers doing direct and COVID-facing care

Including: COVID-19 testers; COVID-19 vaccinators and support staff for a COVID vaccination clinic; Medical Reserve Corps who are called up to vaccinate or other COVID facing direct care work; COVID facing Hospice/palliative care professionals; COVID facing laboratorians; COVID facing imaging professions; emergent employees (manufacturing COVID vaccine)

**Step 2:** Long term care facilities, rest homes and assisted living facilities

**Step 3:** Emergency medical services, police, and fire

Including: all interfacility transport workers, MedFlight staff

**Step 4:** Congregate care settings

Including: Shelters and Corrections

**Step 5:** Home-based health care workers

Including: PT/OT/SLP therapists who work with medically complex home students

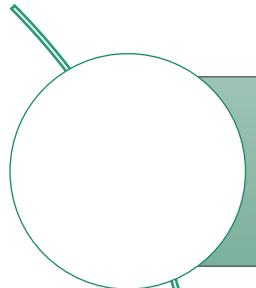
**Step 6:** Health care workers doing non-COVID-facing care

## Step 6: Health care workers doing non-COVID-facing care

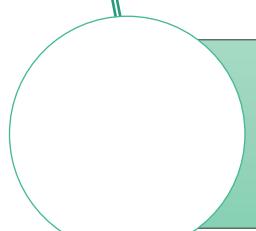
Dentists/dental students	Medical students	Physical therapists	Interpreters who work in hospitals	Behavioral health clinicians not already covered in congregate care or direct care
Non- COVID facing Laboratorians	Blood donation workers	Organ donation procurement worker	Hospice/palliative care professionals	Non-COVID facing Imaging Professionals
Dialysis center workers and patients		Audiologists and speech and language pathologists	Podiatrists	

(ALL ACTIVATED)

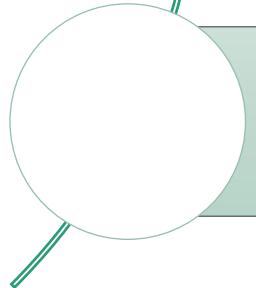
# Phase 1 Vaccination Settings:



Worcester Senior Center



Mass Vaccination Sites



Outreach through healthcare provider

# Phase 2: (February-March 2021)

Step 1: Individuals 75+ (**ACTIVATED**)

Step 2: Individuals age 65+, individuals with 2+ certain medical conditions (only those conditions listed as *at increased risk* for severe illness), and/or residents and staff of low income and affordable senior housing.

Step 3: Other workers

- Including: early education, K-12, transit, grocery, utility, food and agriculture, restaurant and cafe workers; employees across the food, beverages, agriculture, consumer goods, retail, and foodservice sectors; meatpackers; sanitation, public works and public health workers, vaccine development workers, food pantry workers, Uber/Lyft/ride share services/pharmacy delivery drivers (under transit/transportation workers), workers in the passenger ground transportation industry (e.g. paratransit for people with disabilities, food delivery, non-urgent medical transport; convenience store workers (under grocery workers); water and wastewater utility staff; court system workers (judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, clerks), other than court officers who are listed under first responders; Medical supply chain workers; Funeral directors and funeral workers; Shipping port and terminal workers

Step 4: Individuals with one co-morbid condition

# CDC's Comorbid Diseases and Conditions

Adults of any age with the following conditions are at increased risk of severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
- Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher but < 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
- Severe Obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus

# CDC's Comorbid Diseases and Conditions

Adults of any age with the following conditions **might** be at an increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19:

- Asthma (moderate-to-severe)
- Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain)
- Cystic fibrosis
- Hypertension or high blood pressure
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines
- Neurologic conditions, such as dementia
- Liver disease
- Overweight (BMI > 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, but < 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
- Pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissues)
- Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder)
- Type 1 diabetes mellitus

## Phase 3: (Starting April 2021)

- The vaccine is expected to be available to the general public.
  - Including: Higher education workers, including administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff; Bottled beverage industry workers; Veterinarians; Funeral directors and funeral workers; 911 Dispatch employees
- Phase 3 vaccination settings:
  - To find a vaccine clinic in Massachusetts: [Massachusetts \(maimmunizations.org\)](https://Massachusetts (maimmunizations.org))

# Contact us with questions!

- Commissioner Dr. Castiel: [castielm@worcesterma.gov](mailto:castielm@worcesterma.gov)
- Domenica Perrone, Project Manager: [perroned@worcesterma.gov](mailto:perroned@worcesterma.gov)
- State's Vaccine Roll-Out Phases will be updated Tuesdays and Thursdays by 5pm in response to questions submitted via [COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov](mailto:COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov).
- For more information about the vaccine in Massachusetts: [Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccine Information | Mass.gov](#).
- To find a vaccine clinic in Massachusetts: [Massachusetts \(maimmunizations.org\)](#)

# Tell us what you think about the vaccines & your experiences during the pandemic!

This survey helps Worcester area community groups plan programs and services during the pandemic!

The survey is anonymous and is in 9 languages, including English and Twi.

Take the survey here: <https://worcestercovid19survey.com/>.



**What has been YOUR experience living through the COVID-19 pandemic?**

The City of Worcester, Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance and the University of Massachusetts Medical School are inviting **everyone** who lives in the Worcester area to take an online survey.

The purpose of the survey is to learn more about how the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is affecting the lives of people who live in the Worcester area. We will use this information to help plan programs and services. Your answers will remain anonymous. We are all in this together!

Please take the survey if you live in: Worcester, Shrewsbury, Holden, Grafton, Millbury, Leicester or West Boylston.

The survey is in English, Albanian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Twi, Arabic, and Urdu.

# Should someone with allergies get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- You should **not** get the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines if you have a history of severe allergic reaction (also called “anaphylaxis”) to any ingredient in the vaccine.
- The vaccine ingredient list can be found at:
  - Pfizer: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download> (page 2)
  - Moderna: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144638/download> (page 2)
- If you have a history of a severe allergic reaction to something else that's not in the vaccine (like peanut butter), discuss with your health care provider before receiving the vaccine.

# Distinguishing allergic reactions from other type of reactions

Characteristic	Immediate allergic reactions (including anaphylaxis)	Vasovagal reaction	Vaccine side effects (local and systemic)
Timing after vaccination	Most occur within 15-30 minutes of vaccination	Most occur within 15 minutes	Median of 1 to 3 days after vaccination (with most occurring day after vaccination)
<b>Signs and symptoms</b>			
Constitutional	Feeling of impending doom	Feeling warm or cold	Fever, chills, fatigue
Cutaneous	Skin symptoms present in ~90% of people with anaphylaxis, including pruritus, urticaria, flushing, angioedema	Pallor, diaphoresis, clammy skin, sensation of facial warmth	Pain, erythema or swelling at injection site; lymphadenopathy in same arm as vaccination
Neurologic	Confusion, disorientation, dizziness, lightheadedness, weakness, loss of consciousness	Dizziness, lightheadedness, syncope (often after prodromal symptoms for a few seconds or minutes), weakness, changes in vision (such as spots of flickering lights, tunnel vision), changes in hearing	Headache
Respiratory	Shortness of breath, wheezing, bronchospasm, stridor, hypoxia	Variable; if accompanied by anxiety, may have an elevated respiratory rate	N/A
Cardiovascular	Hypotension, tachycardia	Variable; may have hypotension or bradycardia during syncopal event	N/A
Gastrointestinal	Nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea	Nausea, vomiting	Vomiting or diarrhea may occur
Musculoskeletal	N/A	N/A	Myalgia, arthralgia
<b>Vaccine recommendations</b>			
Receive 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose of mRNA COVID-19	No	Yes	Yes

# Will I have to pay for the vaccine?

- No. The vaccine itself is **free** for all Massachusetts residents.
  - Health insurance (including Medicare and Medicaid) will cover the cost of administering the vaccine.
  - Health care providers can also be reimbursed from the federal government for the cost of administering vaccine to undocumented immigrants.

# Will getting the vaccine impact a person's immigration status?

- **No.** Getting the vaccine will not change whether you are able to stay in the US, get a green card, or get public benefits like housing or SNAP.
- **No matter what your immigration status,** it is important for you and your family to be safe from COVID-19.