



## **COVID-19 Vaccines Self-Advocacy Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities**

As a young person with a disability, you have probably heard many people talking about why COVID-19 vaccinations are important – they are!

There is a lot of important information to understand so you can advocate for yourself when it comes to COVID-19. That's where this guide comes in. This guide provides information that will help young people in Maryland with disabilities make choices about the COVID-19 vaccine and boosters. If you have not had the COVID-19 vaccine yet, this guide is for you.

### **What you should know about COVID-19**

COVID-19 is a disease. It can spread quickly from person to person. Most people who get COVID-19 get a little sick, but other people get very sick. People can end up in the hospital and even die from COVID-19.

### **COVID-19 vaccines and boosters**

A vaccine is medicine that comes in a shot. When we were young children, most of us got vaccines that kept us from getting sick from diseases like measles and chickenpox. Many people also get a flu shot each year.

COVID-19 vaccines and boosters were made to fight COVID-19. People that have had their COVID-19 shots are less likely to get very sick, end up in the hospital, or die if they get COVID-19.

## **Your right to make a decision about the COVID-19 vaccine**

In Maryland, if you are under age 18 you often do not have the right to make a final decision about whether or not you get the COVID-19 vaccine. You have to get permission from your parent or guardian.

If you are under 18, you do not have to get permission from your parent or guardian to get a COVID-19 vaccine if you:

- Are married,
- Have a child,
- Do not live with your parent or guardian, or
- Are completely financially independent. This means you pay for all of the things you need without help from your parents or guardian.

## **Advocating for what you want**

Even if you need your parent or guardian's permission to get the COVID-19 vaccine, you should think about whether or not you want to get the shots. Then you can advocate for what you want. It is always important to speak up for what you do and don't want for your healthcare.

The information below can help you decide what you want. Then you can share that with your family and advocate for what you think is best for you!

## **Learn about COVID-19 vaccines**

To make choices that are best for you, you need information that is accurate. This means it is based on facts. It is not made up. The information must also be explained in a way you can understand.

You can get good information by reading, watching videos, listening to podcasts, or talking to somebody you trust. For example, you could get information from a friend, family member, support worker, teacher, or doctor. It is important to know that there is a lot of information online about COVID-19, but not all of it is correct.

For accurate information, Disability Rights Maryland recommends visiting any of the websites listed below. All of these have correct information about COVID-19 and vaccines.

- [“People with Disabilities Can Access the COVID Vaccine”](#): This is a video by Disability Rights Maryland. You can watch it in these languages:
  - [Spanish](#)
  - [French](#)
  - [Mandarin](#)
  - [Amharic](#)
  - [Korean](#)
  - [Russian](#)
- [Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council](#)
- [Autistic Self-Advocacy Network](#)
- [We Can Do This](#)
- [Association of University Centers on Disabilities’ National Center on Disability and Public Health](#)
- [COVID-19 Information for People with Disabilities](#)
- [covidLINK - Maryland Department of Health](#)
- [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)
- [Administration for Community Living](#)

## **Making your decision**

Deciding whether or not to get the COVID-19 vaccine is a very important choice. You should take it very seriously.

If you want help making your decision, ask a family member, friend, support worker, doctor, or teacher you trust. There are good tools online that can help you make a decision.

Here are links to some of them:

- [Speak Out Advocacy](#)
- [COVID-19 Decision-Making Aid](#)

## Meeting your needs

If you need some kind of support, technology, or help to get the vaccine because of your disability, that's your right! Places that give COVID-19 shots must be accessible to you. This means different things for different people. Some examples are wheelchair access, sign language interpreters, and having written information read to you. These are called "accommodations." There are many other types of accommodations people can ask for based on their disability.

For more information about this, please see our fact sheet called "*Reasonable Accommodations for People with Disabilities during the Vaccination Process.*"

## Getting ready for your COVID-19 shots

If you choose to get the vaccine, there are things you can do before you go that may make it easier for you.

Click here to find a place to get your COVID-19 shots: [scheduling your appointment](#).

When you pick a place to get your shot, you will get information about what to bring and what to expect when you get there. You can also ask for the accommodations you need because of your disability.

If you want, ask someone you trust to help you get ready for your appointment and to go with you. If you are nervous, it might help to plan to do something fun after your appointment.

The information below can help you prepare for your shots:

- [My Vaccine Appointment Checklist](#)
- [How I Get My COVID-19 Shot](#)
- [Vaccination Day for People with Disabilities: Tips for Family Advocates](#)

## For more information

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccinations for people with disabilities, please visit [DisabilityRightsMD.org](https://DisabilityRightsMD.org), or call 410-727-635 (Toll-free: 1-800-233-7201) or TTY at 410-235-5387

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Disability Rights Maryland is an organization that advocates for the rights of people with disabilities in Maryland. It is also known as DRM.