

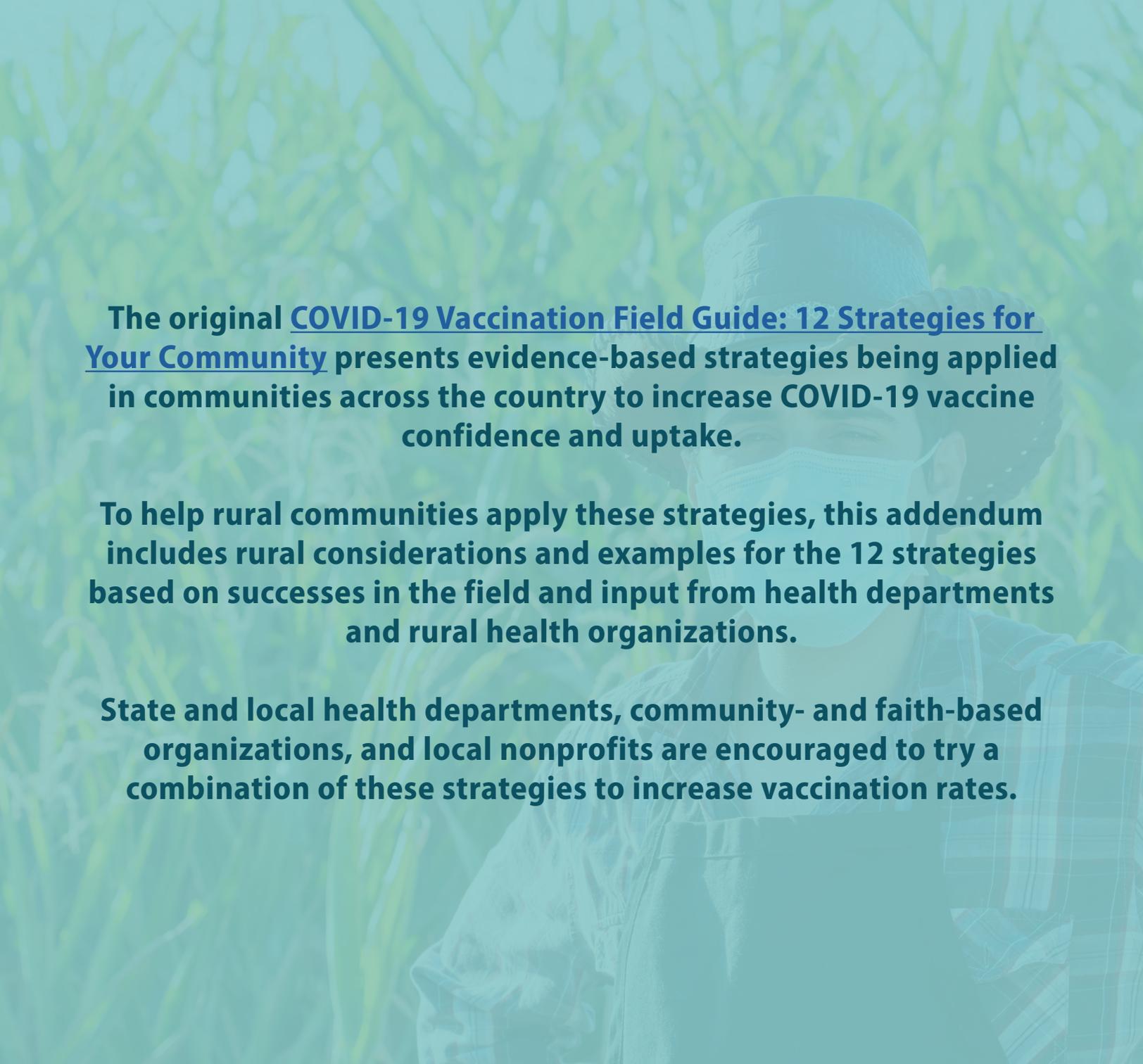
COVID-19 Vaccination Field Guide Addendum: Rural Considerations for Vaccine Confidence and Uptake Strategies



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



Vaccinate with **Confidence**
Strategy to Reinforce Confidence in Covid-19 Vaccines



The original [COVID-19 Vaccination Field Guide: 12 Strategies for Your Community](#) presents evidence-based strategies being applied in communities across the country to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence and uptake.

To help rural communities apply these strategies, this addendum includes rural considerations and examples for the 12 strategies based on successes in the field and input from health departments and rural health organizations.

State and local health departments, community- and faith-based organizations, and local nonprofits are encouraged to try a combination of these strategies to increase vaccination rates.

Vaccine Confidence is the trust that people have in recommended vaccines and how they are administered and developed. Without some level of confidence, people will not move toward receiving a vaccine.

Vaccine Uptake refers to the proportion of the population that has received a vaccine.



Strategy 1

Vaccine Ambassadors

Vaccine ambassadors train community members to disseminate important health information in their communities. They are most effective when they are trusted community members and share similar beliefs and characteristics with their peers.

Rural Consideration

Recruiting vaccine ambassadors may be more challenging in rural areas because communities tend to be very small – everybody knows each other. This can make it riskier for people to actively promote vaccination if they worry about being shunned by their peers, friends, or family. When recruiting ambassadors, it can be helpful to identify people who have already spoken up in support of other issues in their community, even if the issues were not related to health. Consider identifying ambassadors representing different racial/ethnic groups and occupations that are common in the community.

A “snowball” approach can be used, whereby local influencers are asked to identify potential ambassadors, and those people are in turn asked to identify others as well.

Example: The North Carolina Farm Bureau [filmed its President getting vaccinated](#) and shared the video on Facebook.



Strategy 2

Medical Provider Vaccine Standardization

Offering vaccination as a default option during patient visits and integrating vaccination into medical practice procedures.

Rural Consideration

It may be more difficult for rural residents to access routine medical care in general, due to provider shortages in rural areas and long driving distances. Therefore, there may be fewer opportunities for rural residents to access COVID-19 vaccines through routine medical care than for urban or suburban residents. In rural areas, vaccination and/or vaccine counseling can happen during home visits, mobile units, or telemedicine.

Example: The Health Wagon, a free clinic operating in a six-county area of Southwest Virginia, [provides care to people through four mobile units, outreach events, and stationary clinics](#) to provide COVID-19 vaccines.



Strategy 3

Medical Reminders

Messages sent to patients to remind them of recommended or upcoming appointments. Messages can be sent by autodialed phone calls, text messages, or post-cards, for example.

Rural Consideration

In rural communities, where cell phone service or broadband internet may be limited, reminders via text message or email may not be feasible. Using more traditional methods, such as landline phone calls or sending postcards through the mail, can be effective.

Example: Support and Services at Home (SASH) staff used a newsletter and prerecorded phone calls to reach [older adults](#) in affordable housing buildings in rural Vermont, and then helped them schedule appointments and any needed transportation.



Strategy 4

Motivational Interviewing

Patient-centered conversations designed to increase patient motivation and likelihood of health behavior uptake.

Rural Consideration

As rural residents face challenges accessing in-person healthcare, motivational interviewing may need to be employed more often outside of in-person clinical settings. Offering opportunities to talk to a healthcare provider at community events like county fairs, during pharmacy visits, or through telehealth visits, will allow people to ask questions and get their personal concerns addressed at their own convenience. Many rural residents call health departments directly, so it can also be helpful to train public health nurses in how to use motivational interviewing techniques over the phone.

Limited language services can also be a barrier for groups like refugees and migrant farmworkers, so it can be helpful to collaborate with organizations serving these groups to help provide interpretation during vaccine conversations.

Example: In Trousdale County, Tennessee, a private telepharmacy company, AdhereRx, uses [motivational interviewing to overcome barriers](#) to COVID-19 vaccinations.



Strategy 5

Financial Incentives

Financial incentives aim to motivate people to participate in a health behavior by providing a tangible reward, or a chance at a tangible reward, for completion of the behavior.

Rural Consideration

Incentives may be less effective in rural communities that have high levels of government mistrust, and they need to be considered carefully so they do not appear coercive. Smaller incentives may work better than bigger incentives. One size does not fit all, and it's important to tailor incentives to the needs of each community. Some examples of rural-focused incentives include free fishing/hunting licenses, state fair tickets, park passes, or gas gift cards.

Example: The Governor of Minnesota implemented [a vaccination rewards program](#) including free fishing licenses, state fair tickets, baseball tickets, and national park passes.



Strategy 6

School-Located Vaccination Programs

School-located vaccination programs are events held at a school campus to remove logistical barriers and increase vaccine uptake. These can be open to students only, or offered to faculty, families, and the greater community.

Rural Consideration

In rural communities, schools can be a particularly important access point to increase access to COVID-19 vaccination for staff, students, their families, and the wider community. School nurses may be especially trusted by rural families if they do not regularly see other primary healthcare providers.

Example: The Eatonville School District in rural Washington State partnered with a local pharmacy to [vaccinate students](#) 12-15 years old at the local middle school.



Strategy 7

Home-Delivered Vaccinations

Home-delivered vaccination efforts reach populations where they are; traditionally used when barriers to transportation and access exist.

Rural Consideration

To meet the challenges that many people in rural areas face in accessing health services, it can be helpful to offer home-delivered vaccination, especially for older adults, people with disabilities, or those who lack transportation. If rural residents don't want their neighbors to know that they are getting vaccinated, it can be helpful to pair home-delivered vaccination with other health service offerings.

Example: A husband and wife physician team travels hours to deliver vaccines [to rural residents in East Texas](#). They pair vaccines with other internal medicine services.



Strategy 8

Workplace Vaccinations

A vaccination event held on-site at a workplace to remove logistical barriers and create norms. This can be open to employees only or extended to family members or the greater community.

Rural Consideration

Workplace vaccinations help address barriers to accessing COVID-19 vaccination at health services. There are many factories, and food processing plants in rural areas, which are ideal locations for worksite vaccination programs. It is also possible to bring vaccinations out to agricultural fields to vaccinate farmworkers.

Some workers may not wish to make their vaccination status known, so workplace vaccination events may require adjustments to protect privacy. For example, larger employers could offer vaccines at the occupational health clinic instead of in a more visible location in the facility. Smaller employers can help workers to get appointments at local pharmacies and help facilitate transportation. Regardless of employer size, it is important to consider whether language needs or immigration status of workers might make workers hesitant to attend workplace vaccination events.

Example: Regence Health Plans partnered with Medical Teams International to [bring COVID-19 vaccines to migrant farmworkers](#) in rural Oregon.



Strategy 9

Vaccination Requirements

Vaccination requirements are policies that require employees, students, or patrons to be vaccinated and provide proof of vaccination to comply.

Rural Consideration

Many rural residents place a high value on personal freedom, so there may be strong resistance to vaccination requirements. Employers, schools, public events, and restaurants that will be putting requirements in place should plan for regular discussions to answer questions and educate people prior to the implementation of any requirements.

Example: Tyson Foods, [which operates many plants in rural areas](#), required its entire U.S. workforce to be vaccinated by November 1, 2021. They implemented a comprehensive education, engagement, and incentive program during the months leading up to the requirement. In addition, Tyson received positive feedback from staff who say the mandate makes them feel safer.



Strategy 10

Effective Messages Delivered by Trusted Messengers

Effective messages are messages that have undergone testing with the intended population and were shown to produce the desired outcome. Trusted messengers are people seen as credible sources of information by specific populations. Trusted messengers can be trained to be vaccine ambassadors and may include experts.

Rural Consideration

Effective messages used in rural areas can incorporate rural values (e.g., resilience, personal freedom, neighborliness, family) and be tailored to address the reasons for low vaccine confidence in the community. Using images that reflect diverse rural experiences can increase the acceptability of materials. Messages should be written at the appropriate reading level (e.g., 6th grade or lower) and in preferred languages.

In some rural areas, trusted messengers like healthcare providers and faith leaders may be reluctant to promote vaccination. In this case, it may be necessary to think creatively about recruiting other types of messengers. Examples could include school staff, pharmacists, veterinarians, agricultural extension agents, community-based organizations, Farm Board leaders, or 4-H club members. Rural librarians can also serve as trusted messengers, in addition to helping rural residents to access vaccine information and internet services.

Example: In Panola, [Alabama](#), a trusted resident and the county commissioner went door-to-door to persuade other residents to get vaccinated, approaching conversations with kindness and compassion and addressing personal fears and concerns, resulting in 94% of adults getting vaccinated.



Strategy 11

Provider Recommendations

Provider recommendation refers to healthcare professionals suggesting that a patient receive a COVID-19 vaccination.

Rural Consideration

Providers in rural areas often serve a smaller population than those in metropolitan areas. Therefore, recommending the vaccine may make them feel like a lone voice if their communities strongly oppose vaccination. Working with community-based partners who interface with patients can help ensure cohesive messaging in communities. Community health workers can serve as an effective bridge between providers and rural residents.

Example: A network of community partners [employed community health workers](#) to promote COVID-19 vaccination in 32 rural counties in Kentucky and West Virginia.



Strategy 12

Combating Misinformation

Tactics used to address and dismantle misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation refers to the sharing of false information and disinformation refers to information that is deliberately misleading and intended to manipulate a narrative.

Rural Consideration

In rural areas, misinformation may circulate more via word of mouth than on the internet. Identifying the various sources of misinformation can be an important step to addressing misinformation.

To address misinformation circulating via word of mouth, rural vaccine ambassadors can work with trusted messengers, training them to have one-on-one conversations as necessary. Local health departments can work with their County Extension office for highly localized information and expert advice and can partner with local newspapers and radio to ensure accurate information is being disseminated by local, trusted sources.

Example: In response to COVID numbers going up in Walker County, Texas, a local doctor and a radio station [teamed up against misinformation about COVID-19 vaccine](#).