



AFRICA REGION



SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN DISTRESS IN COVID-19 VACCINATION

A basic guideline for National Society staff and volunteers

March 2021

This guideline was reviewed and adapted by the PSS RC and the MHPSS team of the Americas Region June 2021.

Supporting a person in Distress in COVID-19 Vaccination.

Introduction:

The roll out of COVID-19 vaccination in many countries globally is presenting hope for a possible end to the devastating spread of COVID-19 that has caused unprecedented disruption in the normal way of life of people. Whereas the news of the commencement of vaccination has been received with excitement in many countries, it has, on the other hand, created some anxiety, fear and mistrust among sections of the population.

This guideline is therefore developed to support National Society staff and volunteers involved in vaccine roll out with useful tips of how to support target populations for vaccination to manage their stress before, during and after getting the vaccine.

Stress related to COVID-19 vaccination roll out

The roll out of COVID-19 vaccines in the population may create stress not only to the health workers administering them but also the target population receiving the vaccine dosages.

- Fear that the vaccine may cause negative side effects to the receivers
- Fear that the most vulnerable persons may not be reached
- Uncertainty on whether the entire population will be vaccinated.
- Uncertainty on whether after getting a vaccine, people won't acquire COVID-19
- Continuous rumors and misinformation on social media related to the dangers of the vaccine
- General mistrust and hesitancy about the vaccination process

Supporting target population Before getting the vaccine

- Provide up to date, consistent and correct information about the vaccine; facts about the vaccine as part of Risk communication and Community Engagement (RCCE).
- Correctly explain the selection criteria for the different target population for vaccination as approved by the government Ministry of Health
- Clearly explain the vaccination days, time, and venues
- Explain the protocols to be followed while vaccination is ongoing.
- Be available to answer questions, queries and doubts related to the vaccination (this could be remotely or face to face).
- Ask the population to stay calm by avoiding rumors and misinformation
- Explain to the population the importance of seeking facts from trusted sources, such as health facilities or organizations focused on health promotion.
- If possible, support and facilitate the transfer and mobilization to the vaccination centers of people with some type of difficulty that prevents their mobility (older adults, people with reduced mobility).

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Supporting target population During vaccination

- Welcome the persons to the venue for vaccination, present yourself and provide suitable space for stay as the persons wait to be vaccinated.

Ensure that people observe COVID-19 prevention protocols, wearing masks, sanitizing, keeping appropriate physical distance etc.

- Explain the procedure of vaccination at the venue e.g., introducing the vaccinators, explaining about the vaccine, explaining the different steps to follow when taking the vaccine, how the vaccine will be administered, the most common side effects and reaction, etc.
- Clarify misinformation and rumors that people may have regarding the vaccine
- Observe if any person is feeling tensed, fearful, or anxious
- Approach the person and help person to feel relaxed and calm.
- Listen attentively to people's questions, fears, and worries about vaccination, provide information to minimize fears
- Help the person gain sense of control and ready to take the jab.

Observe persons who may manifest heightened fear and anxiety and or refer for better management.

If you observe the person is in serious fear

- *Approach the person with respect*
- *Ask if the person has any concerns and needs help*
- *Listen attentively*
- *Help the person feel calm by being available*
- *Provide relevant information as asked*
- *Link to the health worker if questions are beyond your capacity.*

Supporting target population After vaccination

- Usually after receiving the jab, a person is asked to stay behind for about 30 minutes as the health workers observe the persons reaction to the vaccine.
- Explain that it is normal for a person to feel anxious immediately after taking a vaccine jab, but this subsides with time.
- Tell the persons to stay calm and relaxed.
- Be available to monitor how vaccinated persons may be reacting to the vaccine
- Respond to any person's questions, comments or queries with respect and dignity
- Provide contact details of the health worker (vaccinator) in case a person needs further support.
- Provide practical information to the vaccinated persons on how to monitor their body reactions if any and how to contact the health worker for support.
- Explain the protocols for managing adverse effects following the vaccination (AEFV)- as provided by the Ministry of Health.
- If possible, make a follow up (by calling or physical home visits) to the people vaccinated to find out how they are coping and provide additional support accordingly.

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Self-care strategies.

Listening to people's frustrations and anger due to rumors or vaccination procedures can be stressful to the health worker or volunteer. Manage your own wellbeing and protect your mental health:

- Get adequate facts about the vaccine and the vaccination process before hand for you to answer related questions without fear and panic.
- Protect yourself from COVID-19 by following appropriate preventive measures.
- Have time for yourself, take a rest when you feel exhausted and tired
- Take good meals and eat on time
- As much as possible work in teams to support one another when needed.
- It is okay to say "enough for today."
- If you are overwhelmed by emotions talk to someone you trust or ventilate.
- Refer to the professional health worker any questions or queries beyond your ability to manage.

Key Self-care Tips

- *Know what might cause stress to yourself*
- *Make sure you are observing preventive measures and feel safe*
- *Have information and facts about vaccination*
- *Take a rest when you feel exhausted*
- *Take a good meal*
- *Speak to someone you trust if you are overwhelmed with emotions*
- *Speak to your manager if you need further help.*

End