



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc

Commissioner

October 21, 2021

Dear Colleague:

The New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene strongly encourages providers to collect and report COVID-19 vaccine recipients' race and ethnicity to the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR). Currently, this information is unknown for 20% of adolescent vaccine recipients. Complete and accurate race and ethnicity information is urgently needed to support equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Please consider that every vaccination is an opportunity to address racism. COVID-19 has laid bare enormous racial and ethnic inequities driven by historic and ongoing structural racism across society, most notably in jobs, housing, education, and healthcare. Complete race and ethnicity data are essential to determining which groups would benefit from tailored support to increase vaccine confidence, and to help the City direct resources to groups that need additional support.

Ensure that all staff, especially those who conduct patient intake or administer vaccinations, understand the importance of documenting race and ethnicity information, why it is being requested, and how it is being used. In addition, instruct staff to explain these points to patients.

When asking about race and ethnicity, staff should request all patients self-identify this information. Staff should never assume someone's race or ethnicity based on appearance, languages spoken, or other observations. Staff should not ask about their patients' immigration status. For additional strategies to improve collection of race and ethnicity data, see [here](#).

If your practice uses data from an electronic health record to complete CIR reports, make sure race and ethnicity are separately recorded in patient records so that accurate information can be transmitted to the CIR and tell your staff how to document race and ethnicity in medical records.

We thank you for your assistance in our efforts to address historic disparities in access to health care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jane R. Zucker'.

Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Immunization