



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 22, 2020

Covered California Joins African-American Health Leaders Urging Californians to Get COVID-19 Vaccinations and Encouraging Consumers to Get Covered in 2021

- *Covered California joined forces with African-American health leaders on vaccine safety to urge Black Californians to get inoculated as two surveys found that many were hesitant to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.*
- *The call to encourage all Californians to get vaccinated comes as COVID-19 infections and deaths are surging across the state and country.*
- *In order to address the health care needs of Californians, Covered California extended the first major open-enrollment deadline to give consumers through Dec. 30 to sign up for coverage that begins on Jan. 1.*
- *More than 1.2 million Californians are uninsured right now, even though they are eligible for financial help from Covered California, or low-cost or no-cost coverage through Medi-Cal.*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Covered California teamed up with African-American health leaders on Tuesday to address vaccine confidence and encourage Black Californians to get inoculated with the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available, and to sign up for quality health insurance coverage through Covered California or Medi-Cal.

“The pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on our lives, particularly among communities of color,” said Peter V. Lee, executive director of Covered California. “With a vaccine now being distributed across California and the nation, we are teaming up with African-American health leaders to urge people to get inoculated. The vaccine is our way to stop COVID-19, and we want to urge everyone to get inoculated as soon as the vaccine is available to them.”

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[The latest data from the state](#) shows that the rate of death associated with COVID-19 among Black Californians (7.1 percent) is nearly double the infection rate (4 percent).

Two national surveys show that Black Americans are the racial and ethnic group least likely to get vaccinated. A [Pew Research Center Survey](#) found that only 42 percent of Black Americans said they would “definitely” or “probably” take the COVID-19 vaccine if it were available today, which is well below the results of Asian (83 percent), Hispanic (63 percent) and White (61 percent) groups. A [Kaiser Family Foundation survey](#) also found that willingness of Black adults (62 percent) to get vaccinated was lower than White (73 percent) and Hispanic (71 percent) groups.

[Click here for a fact sheet on “COVID-19 and the African American Community.”](#)

The studies pointed to a fear of side effects and a lack of confidence in the government and medical community, something California health leaders say needs to be addressed and acknowledged to move forward with protecting our communities from COVID-19.

“This distrust is deeply rooted and based on injustices and unethical treatment that many Black Americans have experienced in our medical institutions,” said Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, California surgeon general. “It is imperative that we engage with communities to address their concerns so that all of our communities can feel confident that these vaccines are safe and that they are our key to defeating this virus.”

The Pew Research Center Survey also found that Black Americans are far more likely to say they know someone who has been hospitalized or died as a result of the virus (71 percent) compared to other ethnic groups (Hispanic, 61 percent; White, 49 percent; Asian, 48 percent).

One of the hardest hit regions in the state is Los Angeles, where officials at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital say the infection rate of 25 percent is more than double the county rate.

“We have more COVID-19 patients in our hospital than facilities that are three to four times our size do, and while we exceeded our surge-plan capacity a few days ago, the patients continue to come,” said Dr. Elaine Batchlor, CEO of the hospital. “More than 80 percent of our staff are people of color, and we have vaccinated hundreds of our front-line workers. We need to show the Black community that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and encourage them to get it when they can.”

The higher death rate can be attributed to several factors, including that many Black Americans are part of our essential workforce and more likely to be exposed to the virus and vulnerable to the economic consequences. Black Americans also are disproportionately affected by serious health conditions such as certain cancers, diabetes, hypertension and obesity, which can cause further complications with and vulnerability to COVID-19.

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“The pandemic has affected everyone, but particularly those with underlying health conditions that are more common in the Black community and put people at higher risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19,” said Dr. Adrian James of the West Oakland Health Council. “In addition to assuring our community that these vaccines are safe, we must make sure they are distributed equitably and in a timely fashion to people of color.”

In order to spread the word among African-American communities nationally, America’s Black doctors and nurses have created the [Black Coalition Against COVID-19](#). Dr. David Carlisle is a member of the coalition, as well as the president and CEO of the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, a historically Black school in Los Angeles.

“While it is understandable to question things, the science is clear: We are dealing with a deadly pandemic,” said Carlisle. “COVID-19 kills, and the only solution is a vaccination.”

Click here to watch the Black Coalition Against COVID-19’s video, “[A Love Letter to Black America](#),” which states, “We know that our collective role in helping to create a vaccine that works for Black people — and that we trust — has an impact on our very survival.”

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of quality health care coverage. Right now, an estimated 1.2 million Californians are uninsured — including an estimated 67,000 African Americans — even though they are eligible for financial help through Covered California, or they qualify for low-cost or no-cost coverage through Medi-Cal.

In response to the crisis, and to ensure that Californians have the health care coverage they need during the pandemic, Covered California took the unprecedented step of giving consumers until Dec. 30 to sign up for coverage that begins on Jan. 1, 2021.

Covered California also partnered with national celebrities — such as three-time NBA World Champion and two-time Most Valuable Player, Stephen Curry — to encourage people to get covered. The effort is a call to action to get covered, not only with a mask to protect against COVID-19, but also with a quality health insurance plan.

“Having health insurance means you can stay healthy and get care when you need it. Being healthy means our kids can learn, we can work and our families can be strong,” [Curry said in this video](#). “Today in America, too many people in our communities don’t have health insurance. It’s one reason why Black Americans are disproportionately impacted by COVID and other health conditions. That’s got to change.”

“In the middle of the worst health crisis in more than a century, we have far too many Californians who do not have the protection and peace of mind that comes with health insurance,” Lee said. “Most of the people who are uninsured either do not know they are eligible for financial assistance, or they have not checked recently to see how affordable quality coverage can be.”

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Consumers who want Jan. 1 coverage will need to sign up by Dec. 30 and pay their first bill in order to have their coverage take effect.

Financial Help Lowers Costs for Consumers

Roughly nine out of every 10 consumers who enroll through Covered California receive financial assistance — in the form of federal tax credits, state subsidies, or both — which helps make health care more affordable. California's state subsidies, which first became available in 2020, are benefiting nearly 600,000 consumers — including more than 41,000 middle-income consumers who had previously been ineligible for financial help because they exceeded the federal income requirements.

The state subsidies are only available to eligible consumers through Covered California. The amount of financial help consumers receive will vary depending on their age, their annual household income and the cost of health care in their region.

The state individual mandate penalty will also return for 2021. Consumers who can afford health care coverage, but choose to go without, could pay a penalty when they file their state taxes in 2022. The penalty is administered by California's Franchise Tax Board, and could be as much as \$2,250 for a family of four.

Shop and Compare

Those interested in applying for coverage can explore their options — and find out whether they are eligible for financial help — in just a few minutes by using the [Shop and Compare Tool](#) at CoveredCA.com. All they need to do is enter their ZIP code, household income and the ages of those who need coverage to find out which plans are available in their area.

Covered California has already begun to see high call volumes and is encouraging consumers to act now and not wait until the end of the month to sign up.

“Do not wait until the last minute, or let this deadline go past, without checking your options,” Lee said. “In only a few minutes at [CoveredCA.com](#), you can see which plans are available in your area and whether you qualify for financial help to bring the price of coverage within reach.”

Getting Help Enrolling

Consumers interested in learning more about their coverage options can:

- Visit www.CoveredCA.com.
- [Get free and confidential in-person assistance](#), in a variety of languages, from a certified enroller.
- Have a certified enroller [call them](#) and help them for free.
(more)

- Call Covered California at (800) 300-1506.

About Covered California

Covered California is the state's health insurance marketplace, where Californians can find affordable, high-quality insurance from top insurance companies. Covered California is the only place where individuals who qualify can get financial assistance on a sliding scale to reduce premium costs. Consumers can then compare health insurance plans and choose the plan that works best for their health needs and budget. Depending on their income, some consumers may qualify for the low-cost or no-cost Medi-Cal program.

Covered California is an independent part of the state government whose job is to make the health insurance marketplace work for California's consumers. It is overseen by a five-member board appointed by the governor and the Legislature. For more information about Covered California, please visit www.CoveredCA.com.

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