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Disability Rights Iowa Urges State to Develop System to Vaccinate Homebound Iowans

(March 19, 2021 – Des Moines, IA) – Iowa currently does not have a system for vaccinating Iowans with disabilities who cannot leave their homes to get vaccinated. Disability Rights Iowa – the federally mandated protection and advocacy system for Iowans with disabilities – urges the state to immediately implement a system for reaching out to homebound Iowans and give them the opportunity to get vaccinated.

As more people under 65 with pre-existing conditions are eligible to receive the vaccine in Iowa, the disability community can now access the most effective countermeasure to COVID-19. However, there are still barriers to getting vaccinated for people who cannot leave their homes. Some people who cannot leave their homes do not have safe transportation to vaccination sites, especially if they can only find appointments outside of their county. Additionally, people with a comorbidity with COVID-19 may not be able to risk being exposed to COVID-19 because their health would be compromised. People that cannot leave their home might have care staff and family members helping with their daily needs. The potential exposure to COVID-19 from such staff places them at an increased risk similar to someone in a [nursing home](#).

We understand that several counties in Iowa have developed ways to reach out to individuals with disabilities who cannot leave their homes to get vaccinated, but, to our knowledge, there is no comprehensive, easy, and accessible statewide plan to reach out to individuals who can't leave their homes to get vaccinated. We encourage both the state and counties to inform the public on their websites about how they can get vaccinated if they cannot leave their homes for health reasons.

Iowa does not have to develop plans from scratch and can look to other state and federal initiatives that have creative solutions to vaccinating people in their homes. [Florida](#) has vaccinated over 1,500 at-risk people in their homes through the help of state workers, local fire-rescue, and paramedic teams. Anyone who is eligible in Florida and wants to be vaccinated at home can request an appointment by sending their information to a specific email intended only for people that can't leave home. In [San Antonio](#), they are working with Meals on Wheels workers to identify if any of their clients wish to receive the vaccine in their home. These names are then passed on to the state to prioritize who receives the vaccine. Texas has also created a hotline specifically for people who cannot leave their home to request an appointment. [Vaccine Community Connectors](#), a federal initiative, is using mobile clinics to administer the vaccine to people in their home in vulnerable and underserved communities.

Jane Hudson, the Executive Director of Disability Rights Iowa urges the state and counties to develop creative solutions for vaccinating individuals with disabilities who can't leave their homes: "Our goal is to ensure that all Iowans are vaccinated. Please don't forget those who can't leave their homes to get vaccinated."

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About Disability Rights Iowa: Disability Rights Iowa is part of a nationwide network of protection and advocacy systems established in the 1970s by the U.S. Congress to respond to abuse and neglect of Iowans with disabilities and/or mental illnesses. DRI defends and promotes the human and legal rights of Iowans who have disabilities and mental illnesses. We promote safety, opportunity, access, and self-determination for all Iowans. For more information, please visit www.disabilityrightsowa.org.