Beat: Health

U.S ADMINISTRATION UNVEILS NEW ACTIONS ADDRESSING THE NEEDS DISABLED OF PEOPLE

&THE SENIOR WHO RECOVERED FROM COVID19

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USPA NEWS - The U.S Administration recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has had tremendous impacts on disabled individuals and has resulted in new members of the disability community. Over the past year, the Administration has collaborated and consulted with the disability community and taken several key actions to address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. Among other actions, the U.S. government released key civil rights guidance to protect disabled individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic or any public health emergency; prioritized Long COVID services, supports, and research in the context of disability; established a call line dedicated to ensuring individuals with disabilities can equitably utilize the Administration's at-home test distribution program; ensured disabled individuals and other high-risk individuals have access to at-home testing; and invested American Rescue Plan (ARP) resources to build COVID-19 vaccine confidence and access among people with disabilities. Source: White House

U.S ADMINISTRATION UNVEILS NEW ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS DISABLED PEOPLE & SENIORS
IN RESPONSE TO RECOVERY & RECOVERY FROM COVID-19

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THE U.S ADMINISTRATION WILL:

1-Equip schools with guidance and support to keep vulnerable students safe and learning in-person. The Department of Education (ED) will work with school administrators and educators on strategies they can use to continue providing safe, in-person instruction for all students in their classes. ED will engage the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to ensure that its guidance is fully aligned with the latest public health guidance and that schools have clear recommendations and strategies to help protect the safety of and access to rigorous learning that all children deserve. ED will also provide resources for parents who would like additional support in understanding how to navigate their child's in-person learning experience through local regional parent training and information centers. Parents may find their local center here and reach out for direct assistance and referrals to other organizations, as well as to gain skills to effectively participate in the education and development of their children. States and school districts should use the unprecedented resources provided through the ARP to implement these recommendations and ensure access to a high-quality education for all students, including students with disabilities. Children learn best in-person, and are better able to engage with

rigorous instruction and access services and supports tailored to their needs when they are learning alongside their peers. The President has been clear since Day One that we need students back to school for full-time, in-person learning, and thanks to the unprecedented resources provided through the ARP, schools have what they need to safely remain open, keep students and staff safe, and address the impact of the pandemic on student learning and mental health. Some students may need additional protections to ensure they can remain safe in the classroom – including students who are immunocompromised, with complex medical conditions, or with other disabilities that may put them at higher risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19. For nearly two years, educators across the country have provided services and supports to children with disabilities in ways never anticipated prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Administration is committed to ensuring that children with disabilities continue to receive the services and supports they need so they can reach their highest potential.----------

2- Expand the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Community Living's Disability Information and Access Line to support people with disabilities who face difficulty using or cannot use a self-test. The Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL), available at 1-888-677-1199, is launching a new initiative to support disabled individuals who need assistance using at-home tests distributed by the Administration or support in finding alternatives to at-home testing. For individuals who can use an at-home test, DIAL operators are available to assist with ordering free tests; understanding instructions for test administration and test results; or providing alternative instructions for those unable to access, read, or understand the manufacturer's version. For those who cannot use an at-home test, DIAL operators can assist individuals with ordering tests to collect a specimen that can be mailed back for results. For individuals who cannot use either an at-home test or an alternative "swab and send" test, DIAL operators can assist callers with locating their state or local health department and/or aging and disability resources for additional assistance with other testing options that may be available in their community, including identifying potential in-home testing options or assistance with transportation or companion support to visit a community-based testing site.

3- Launch new COVID-19 testing guidance in American Sign Language and review all existing COVID-19 guidance to confirm accessibility for all disabled individuals. CDC recently released "How to Interpret Positive Self-Test Results" guidance in American Sign Language (ASL), a first step towards ensuring that deaf or hard of hearing individuals can access key information about how to protect themselves and their communities. CDC is also collaborating with the CDC Foundation, Georgia Tech's Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation, and their partners across HHS to pursue key improvements for all COVID-19 guidance available on CDC's website that cannot be accessed elsewhere: information in Braille, ASL translation, simplified text, and other alternative formats.----------

4- Execute a new effort to develop at-home COVID-19 tests that are accessible to all. The National Institutes of Health (NIH)'s RADx program has launched a new effort to seek both short- and long-term solutions to improve at-home test accessibility. RADx will consult and work with national organizations who represent communities in need of accessible tests, and test manufacturers to inform the modification or development of more accessible at-home tests, including device design, packaging, and modes of instruction, and challenges. Though at-home COVID-19 tests were only invented last year, the Administration's investment in this technology has rapidly scaled up manufacturing to the millions per day. This effort strives to ensure that all individuals have an option for at-home testing that can be used and interpreted without assistance, and will set the course towards accessible testing in the weeks and months to come.

5- Incentivize all at-home test manufacturers to prioritize accessibility of at-home tests. The Administration has published a formal Request for Information (RFI) to ensure the preservation and expansion of current domestic manufacturing capacities for at-home rapid tests and point-of-care tests. The RFI specifically asks manufacturers to prioritize the accessibility of at-home tests for people who are blind or visually-impaired; individuals with physical, cognitive, or other disabilities; and individuals who need non-English language or literacy support. The Administration will use the information gathered in March 2022 to inform near-term investments – towards ensuring that accessible at-home tests are available for federal purchase.

6- Request accessible instructions from manufacturers who have received a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). The FDA has reached out to all test developers that have received an EUA to request that they provide instructions that are accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, including alternative text for all images as well as html versions. FDA will use all authority available to receive these accessible instructions as quickly as possible, while working with RADx to identify other wraparound services that can be provided immediately to make existing at-home tests more accessible.

7- Distribute masks to disabled individuals through community-based organizations and jurisdictions. HHS will support health centers and aging and disability networks as they collaborate on efforts to distribute N95 masks to individuals with disabilities who cannot leave their homes. As the President announced in January 2022, the Administration is making 400 million N95 masks from the Strategic National Stockpile available to all individuals in the United States for free. HHS is sending tens of millions of free, high-quality masks to community health centers and rural health clinics – organizations that play a critical role in serving communities across the country, including individuals with disabilities.

8- Call on states to directly distribute high-quality masks through community-based organizations serving individuals with disabilities. Over the past year, the Administration has also sent millions of high-quality masks to states and territories across the country. We encourage all jurisdictions to work in partnership with community-based organizations to expand access for the hardest-hit and highest-risk individuals – including people with disabilities who may be unable to leave their homes. » Source: White House

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