

Quick Tips for Sensory-Friendly Vaccination Events

A Community Education Tool

Why It Matters

Many Autistic individuals and people with sensory sensitivities avoid healthcare settings due to overwhelming stimuli or past negative experiences. Sensory-friendly vaccination events promote equity, reduce stress, and ensure accessible care for all.



Before the Appointment

- **Ask About Sensory Needs**

Include questions during registration:

- "What accommodations would help you feel comfortable?"
- "What worked (or didn't) at past appointments?"

- **Share Prep Materials**

- Provide visual schedules, clinic maps, and photos.
- Email forms in advance to shorten check-in time.

- **Use Social Narratives**

- Offer simple, picture-based stories to explain the process.



Environmental Adjustments

- **Lighting**

- Dim fluorescents; use natural/LED lighting. Avoid flickering lights.

- **Noise**

- Supply noise-canceling headphones. Minimize loud sounds/music.
- Offer quiet waiting areas or car waiting.

- **Space & Layout**

- Use private vaccination rooms and clear signage.
- Provide flexible seating (ex., bean bags, cushions).
- Designate calming observation zones.

- **Sensory Tools**

- Offer fidgets, weighted lap pads, or comfort items.
- Use distraction tools (ex., Buzzy® Bee, Shotblocker).
- Let individuals choose Band-Aid colors/types.



Staff & Volunteer Training

- **Teach Recognition of Sensory Overload**
 - Respond with patience; avoid forced eye contact.
 - Assign support volunteers to assist families with flexibility.



Day-of Supports

- **Flexibility**
 - Allow extra time, arm choice, or breaks.
 - Permit comfort items (ex. stuffed animals, blankets).
 - Use visual aids/ACC for non-speaking individuals.
- **Family Inclusion**
 - Provide quiet spaces with snacks/drinks for all ages.
 - Include calming activities for siblings/support people.

