

Motivational Interviewing Facilitator Guide:

Addressing Risks and Benefits of the COVID Vaccine



PURPOSE

To help supervisors, nurses, and educators have supportive, fact-based conversations with staff who have concerns or misinformation about the COVID vaccine. This approach uses Motivational Interviewing (MI) — a respectful, person-centered communication method that helps people explore their own reasons for change rather than being told what to do.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

1. **Engage:** Listen without judgment. Reflect what the person feels so they feel heard.
Example: "I can see how that last experience made you a bit wary."
2. **Focus:** Concentrate on the person's current situation and goals. What matters to them? What motivates them?
Example: "You want to stay healthy and not miss work."
3. **Evoke:** Help the person notice the gap between their values and current behavior. Evoke the person's internal motivation for change.
Example: "You said you want to protect your family and residents — the vaccine helps you do that."
4. **Plan:** Help the person envision and plan change. Secure a commitment to the plan. Give advice when asked.
Example: "You're doing the right thing by asking questions before deciding."

FACILITATOR TIPS FOR USING THE SCRIPT

1. Start with Curiosity, Not Correction: Ask open questions such as "What have you heard that worries you the most." Avoid statements like "You're wrong."

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2. Reflect and Affirm: Use reflective statements like “I can see how that looks confusing and you are trying to do the right thing for you and your family.” These affirmations reduce defensiveness.
3. Ask Permission to Share Information: Say “Can I share what we know about that?” to show respect and increase listening.
4. Gently Correct Misinformation: Acknowledge first, then correct calmly using credible sources like CDC or facility guidance.
5. Connect Back to Personal Values: Link vaccination to family, residents, and job security to build motivation.
6. End with Collaboration: Summarize key points and invite next steps, e.g., “What would make it easier for you to get the vaccine?”

KEY TALKING POINTS FOR FACILITATORS

1. Side effects are a normal immune response and usually mild.
2. Vaccines reduce severity and complications — they don’t guarantee zero infection.
3. Encourage staff to check reliable sources before sharing online content.
4. Vaccinated staff help protect residents and families.
5. Long COVID and missed work are real risks — vaccines help minimize both.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR TALKING POINTS DURING TRAINING

- Emphasize **tone** and **nonjudgment** when responding to misinformation.
- Encourage participants to **avoid rapid-fire fact dumping** without first eliciting concerns.
- Use reflective statements frequently to ensure the staff member feels heard.
- Highlight opportunities to **reinforce personal values** such as staying healthy, protecting residents, and maintaining employment.
- Encourage the use of **trustworthy analogies** and **simple language** when correcting myths.
- Practice **closing with partnership**, offering to follow-up and build ongoing trust.

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RESOURCES TO SHARE WITH STAFF

- CDC: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines
- State Health Department COVID updates
- Facility Infection Prevention or Employee Health contact
- CDC: [“Myths and Facts About COVID-19 Vaccines”](#)

FACILITATOR REFLECTION

After using this script, reflect on: What emotions or concerns did staff express most? How did empathy and reflective listening help? What can be adjusted next time to build even more trust and openness?