

Illinois Extension Contributes To Vaccination Awareness Effort In State

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URBANA — There are many factors that influence whether an individual chooses to be vaccinated. A lack of reliable information can create vaccine hesitancy, particularly in rural and medically underserved communities.

A new partnership between [Cooperative Extension](#), the Extension Foundation, U.S. Department of Agriculture's [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#), and the [Centers](#)

[for Disease Control and Prevention](#) is empowering land-grant universities across the country to strengthen immunization education with a special focus on adult vaccine hesitancy around both COVID-19 and other adult vaccines.

“Across the region, several populations lag behind in getting vaccinated due to lack of awareness, lack of access, or hesitancy,” says [Jennifer McCaffrey, University of Illinois Extension](#) assistant dean and program leader in family and consumer sciences. “This can create disparities related to health.”

The [Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement](#) program addresses these disparities by funding Extension programs to collaborate with the [CDC’s Vaccinate with Confidence](#) communication campaign, focusing on COVID-19, and to launch pilot projects educating adults in underserved regions on the benefits of multiple vaccines, such as flu and shingles.

McCaffrey says that Extension, as a trusted source in the community with connections across many organizations, is uniquely positioned to address this issue in underserved communities.

“The project will allow us to bring information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine to those seeking information,” McCaffrey says. “It will also allow us to promote vaccine opportunities at trusted locations in the community.”

The initial focus will be on southern Illinois where vaccination rates are lowest. In the second phase of the project, Illinois Extension will partner with Purdue University to extend the program’s reach across the border to southern Indiana.

SOURCE: [Jennifer McCaffrey](#), Assistant Dean, Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Illinois Extension

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