

PRESS RELEASE

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Eastern Highlands Health District Vaccination Campaign on the Right Track

Agency Readies New Train-Themed Messaging for Fall/Winter Virus Season

(MANSFIELD) - The Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) has created an innovative health education campaign to encourage everyone to “get on board” with updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 and flu vaccines for the fall/winter respiratory virus season.

Utilizing the universal appeal of trains that spans cultures and generations, the campaign features images, sounds, and expressions associated with passenger trains and classic locomotives to promote the message “Get on Board. Stay on Track. Get Vaxed.”

“In late June, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended the updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines to protect against severe COVID-19 and flu this fall and winter,” said EHHD Director of Health Robert Miller. “Thanks to CDC grant funding, our team was able to create effective, engaging, and educational messaging that will be shared across a number of platforms to reach at-risk populations in our health district with vaccine information and opportunities.”

CDC recommends **everyone ages 6 months and older receive an updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine** to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of COVID-19 this fall and winter whether or not they have ever previously been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine or tested positive for COVID-19.

According to the CDC, the virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, is always changing and protection from COVID-19 vaccines declines over time. COVID 19-vaccines are effective at protecting people from getting seriously ill, being hospitalized, and dying. Vaccination remains the *safest strategy* for avoiding hospitalizations, long-term health outcomes, and death.

Additionally, CDC recommends **everyone 6 months of age and older, with rare exceptions, receive an updated 2024-2025 flu vaccine** to reduce the risk of influenza and its potentially serious complications this fall and winter. The protection provided by a flu vaccine varies from season to season and depends in part on the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine and the similarity or “match” between the viruses in the vaccine and those in circulation. The flu vaccine can keep individuals from getting sick with flu and has been shown to reduce severity of illness in people who get sick despite vaccination.

A common question in the fall has been if it is safe to receive COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the same time? “Yes,” explained EHHD Community Health & Wellness Coordinator Cecile Serazo, RN. “Co-administration of vaccines refers to the common clinical practice of giving or getting more than one vaccine during a visit. While there are some exceptions, getting a flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine at the same visit is recommended if you are eligible and the timing for each vaccine is right. Ask your doctor what is right for you.”

The overriding message of the EHHD *Get on Board* campaign is that vaccines have protected families for generations and staying on track with seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccines can protect against serious illness. Because seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccines reduce the severity and duration of illness, vaccination could be just the ticket to keep an individual from being derailed with seasonal respiratory illnesses. The messages, featured in print, on radio, television, at gas stations, and on social media, urge people to ask their doctor for their “train of thought” regarding vaccination and what is right for individual patients.

The EHHD partnered with The Creative Quill to develop the marketing campaign and theme, which was a natural extension of previous years’ guidance provided by the office. EHHD Senior Project Specialist Ande Bloom, who is coordinating the campaign shares, “throughout the pandemic, whenever I spoke with school nurses, community partners, or individuals about the virus, I would always use a train analogy to explain the difference between the guidance for being infected and being exposed and how to keep on track and moving in the right direction. The Creative Quill developed a concept that honored our past work and made perfect sense to keep our message quite literally on track and moving forward. Trains stay on schedule for the public good. We encourage our communities to stay on track with vaccination schedules for the same reason. We are excited for the EHHD train campaign to leave the station this fall.”

EHHD prevents illness and promotes wellness for communities in eastern Connecticut and serves the towns of Andover, Ashford, Bolton, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Mansfield, Scotland, Tolland, and Willington. For more information about seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccines including community immunization clinic opportunities, visit <http://www.ehhd.org/vax>.

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