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Shannon Kettler
Cincinnati Children's
shannon.kettler@cchmc.org



MEDIA ALERT

Cincinnati Children's Doctor to Speak before President Joe Biden's COVID-19 Taskforce about Vaccine Access for People with Disabilities

[Kara Ayers, PhD](#), with the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at [Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center](#) has been invited to speak this Friday before the Biden-Harris COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force about her team's national efforts to help people with disabilities gain access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

As part of her role with the [Center for Dignity in Healthcare for People with Disabilities](#) and the [University of Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities \(UCCEDD\)](#), Ayers and her team of researchers at Cincinnati Children's, most with disabilities themselves, collaborated with the Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center to create the [COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization Dashboard](#). It tracks vaccine prioritization plans in all 50 states, five U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.

"As a person who has a rare disease, COVID-19 brought a lot of anxiety to my life and I could relate to how others in the disability community were feeling," Ayers said. "There were a lot of questions and confusion surrounding the vaccine rollout state to state. This new tracker tool was a way for people with disabilities to navigate and get answers not only here locally but across the country."

The tool breaks down vaccine eligibility by state across five categories, including: 1) long-term care settings, such as nursing homes; 2) other types of congregate care settings, including group homes; 3) people with chronic conditions; 4) additional disability-related groups, including three main groups: (a) people with disabilities who receive direct support care in the community, (b) people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, or (c) definitions uniquely defined by the state; and 5) caregivers of people with disabilities living at home, including both paid and unpaid caregivers.

Currently, the website, which launched in February 2021, averages more than 1,000 views a day and is updated on a weekly basis. Ayers said the website will continue to be updated with information as different groups become eligible for the vaccine. A planned expansion will also track the accessibility of state websites to learn about or register for the vaccine.

"In the disability community, we often use the phrase 'nothing about us, without us,' and I'm proud that this project is disability-led," Ayers said. "In the future, we hope the data and lessons learned through creating the tool allows policy makers to improve data collection about disability in the public health space and make more equitable decisions about healthcare."