

ABSW & HAAC COVID-19 RESPONSE & IMPACT TEAM

COMMUNITY UPDATE NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 4

NOV. 2021

CO-MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Veronica and Sharon

Greetings from your COVID-19 Initiative Co-Managers! A lot has happened since our last message to you in the June Newsletter.

We predicted then that the pandemic would still be with us and that we needed to remain ready to deal with more testing, vaccinations and the requirements of proof of vaccination.

As well, there was talk in the US about vaccines for children and the possible need for booster vaccines for some people who were already vaccinated. So, here we are in November and again, ready to respond to the needs of our communities across Nova Scotia.

As the threat of COVID-19 continues, so does the work of the ABSW and HAAC COVID-19 Initiative. We began vaccine clinics and promotional advertisements specifically for our communities early this year and now we continue to make sure information and resources are in place.

Our Toll-Free Line is still in place to provide support for people who are dealing with the stressors of COVID-19 and ongoing life issues. We continue to offer programs and assistance during these challenging and changing times.

Our experiences with anti-Black racism will continue to affect our lives and our health but through initiatives such as ours, we can help each other build resilience and forge our own path to improving our individual and collective health.

Keeping our people informed is our priority. That is why we provide up-to-date health information in newsletters and Town Halls. Our last Town Hall on September 17th discussed proof of vaccines and vaccine mandates. It is available on our HAAC YouTube page [here](#).

We completed a Town Hall on November 23rd and discussed COVID-19 vaccinations for children. In December we will have another Town Hall to discuss booster vaccinations for adults.

We personally want to thank our communities for doing so well, keeping each other safe and continuing to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols. We are so proud of the work we do with you on behalf of the health of Our People.



Dr. Chad Williams Message



The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge globally over the last couple of years. It has also disproportionately affected racialized groups, including our African Nova Scotian community. Nova Scotia has done relatively well in meeting the challenge and following the science and public health regulations and recommendations.

Our African Nova Scotian community should also be applauded for embracing these measures, including embracing vaccination as an important pillar in our battle against this dangerous virus.

We can do better though. While we manage this viral pandemic, many are simultaneously trying to manage the constant flow of information. Unfortunately, there is also a significant amount of misinformation, and this has been a major problem in our Black communities, affecting young and old alike and affecting individuals across the socioeconomic spectrum.

There are many community members who have questions and concerns about vaccine safety, despite the overwhelming data showing the vaccine to be very safe. Indeed, there are also individuals who question whether their faith precludes them from COVID-19 vaccination. They claim a religious exemption.

These concerns and questions should not be dismissed. We need to talk! I think that it is important to listen to these voices; to validate and hear that they are concerned. And then we must fellowship with them through love, understanding and education. This is the way that we have always gotten through tough times in our communities; by respecting, loving, and leaning on one another. This is how will we get through the pandemic

The ABSW and HAAC are devoted to assisting the community in this regard. I would advise anyone who has questions or concerns to reach out through the Toll-Free Line (1-855-732-1253).

Dr. Chad Williams
Gastroenterologist

KIDS AND THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Author: Dr. Ryan Sommers, Medical Officer of Health

Health Canada and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) have now approved the use of the COVID-19 (Pfizer) vaccine for children aged 5-11 years old. This is an essential next step to help end the Coronavirus Pandemic and get us one step closer back to our new normal. Parents need to have the most up-to-date and accurate information to make the best decisions to protect the health of their children and families.

Why do kids need to get vaccinated?

The coronavirus has rapidly adapted over the past 18 months. These newer versions of the virus, also known as variants, are more transmissible and are just as likely to infect children at the same rates as adults. The virus now infects more children compared to previous COVID-19 waves in Nova Scotia. More cases in children have resulted in more exposures in schools and children spreading COVID-19 within families.

Vaccination is the best way to protect children from becoming severely ill with COVID-19 or having long-term effects from the virus. While children and adolescents are typically at lower risk than adults of becoming severely ill or hospitalized from COVID-19, it is still possible.

FACTS

The COVID-19 Vaccine Works - really well!

One year ago, the COVID-19 vaccines were approved in Canada. Scientists and physicians have been impressed by how well the vaccine helps prevent severe events such as hospitalizations and death. Extensive research has shown that the COVID-19 pediatric vaccines are just as effective as the adult version. We also know that the overall benefits of the vaccine outweigh vaccine side effects. Vaccines will help keep kids in school and prevent temporary closures. We know kids' overall health, learning and social development is better when they are in school with their teachers and friends.



The COVID-19 vaccine is safe.

Side effects can occur with any immunization. After a COVID-19 vaccine shot, the most common symptoms are a slight fever, muscle and joint aches, and headaches. These usually last 1 – 2 days. People sometimes report more pronounced side effects after their second dose.

The risk of a child having a severe adverse reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine is very low. One rare complication linked to the COVID-19 vaccine is myocarditis (inflammation of the heart), and data demonstrate a higher risk for such inflammation among younger males. However, reports of these complications are rare. The risk of developing myocarditis after a COVID-19 infection is much higher than the risk of developing myocarditis after the vaccine.

Keeping children safe and healthy is top of mind for everyone. Before being authorized for children, scientists and medical experts completed their review of safety and effectiveness data from clinical trials of thousands of children. The COVID-19 vaccine was rigorously tested and reviewed. Millions of Canadian adolescents ages 12-17 have already safely received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Help protect your community.

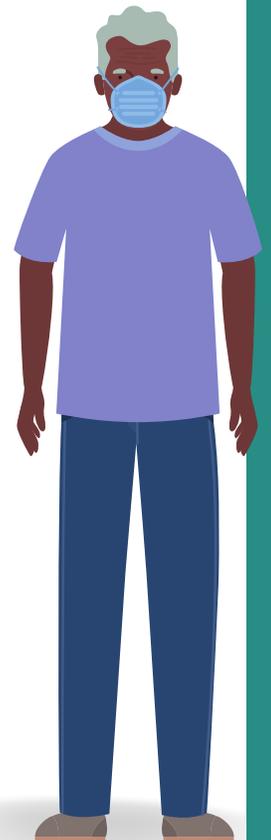
Having your child vaccinated will protect family members and friends, especially those at high risk. It will also allow kids to get back to doing what they do best – be a kid! Getting the COVID-19 vaccines will enable children to safely do more of the activities they enjoy, like attending birthday parties, playing sports, and spending time indoors with their friends and family members.

If you have more questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, please speak to your health care provider and visit the below trusted online resources:

[Nova Scotia Government: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Vaccine](#)

[Government of Canada: Vaccines for COVID-19](#)

[Canadian Pediatric Society: COVID-19 Vaccine for Children](#)



COVID-19 BOOSTER

Nova Scotians who are eligible for a COVID-19 booster dose of mRNA vaccine can schedule an appointment starting November 23.

The groups eligible for a COVID-19 booster dose in Nova Scotia six months after their primary series are:

- a long-term care resident
- a designated caregiver of a long-term care resident and frontline healthcare workers who have 2 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine with less than 28 days between doses
- anyone 70 and older
- people who received two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine

Booster doses will be available soon in First Nations and African Nova Scotian communities across the province. Clinics will be organized in partnership with the communities, with support from local public health representatives. More information coming soon.

Anyone who is eligible can also book an appointment online at <https://novascotia.ca/vaccination>. People who are unable to book online can call **1-833-797-7772** toll-free to schedule an appointment.





Associate Deputy Minister Dwayne
Provo

AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN AFFAIRS

On October 12, Dwayne Provo was appointed as the Associate Deputy Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs (ANSA).

For more than two decades, Dwayne has worked directly in the community including as a former executive director of the Black Educators Association, and most recently as a provincial regional education officer in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, advising the government on issues affecting African Nova Scotian learners.

This is the first time that the government has appointed an Associate Deputy Minister to focus solely on African Nova Scotian Affairs (ANSA). Dwayne will work with communities across the province, champion ANSA's important work to advance community issues, and bring community voices to the table at the senior government level.

African Nova Scotian Affairs (ANSA)

ANSA is a vital link that connects government and African Nova Scotian communities. It promotes understanding of African Nova Scotian heritage and culture and supports concerns and issues that need to be addressed: <https://ansa.novascotia.ca>

ANSA recently released the Fall 2021 issue of their Newsletter: **Passages and Prosperity**. Catch up on the latest news, work, and initiatives of our African Nova Scotian communities at <https://ansa.novascotia.ca/content/ansa-newsletter-passages-and-prosperity>.



RACE IN HEALTH DATA

Sharon Davis-Murdoch
Co-President - Health Association of African Canadians

As I wrote in the last Newsletter, every step of our journey with COVID-19 has reminded us how important it is to have health information that is specific to Us as a People. HAAC has advocated for this health information for the 21 years that we have been established.

Finally, after all this time and all our work, the Nova Scotia Government has agreed to move forward on this.

First, Public Health agreed, last year, to make it possible to identify by race when you go for your COVID-19 vaccine. The public health nurses go through the process of asking a number of questions to ensure that the vaccine is safe for you, and they also ask you about your race. You can choose to self-identify or not, but if you do, it can help the health system finally get the information our People have been asking for, like how many of us are being vaccinated.

Just recently, the new NS Government committed to support the collection of race-based data in the health system. HAAC is collaborating to move forward on our recommended, community engagement. HAAC has always stated data that is collected by race, ethnicity, and language, will require the government to identify and address systemic racism and inequities in health care. We need to ensure that policies, programs and funding decisions are made to better serve our People and Communities. This will be the beginning of collecting Our health information for the long term.

Below, please see the schedule of sessions available (in-person and virtually) to make your voice heard about the collection of health data in ways that improve our services, improve our access, improve our health, and make sure our privacy is protected and that we have control of the information collected.

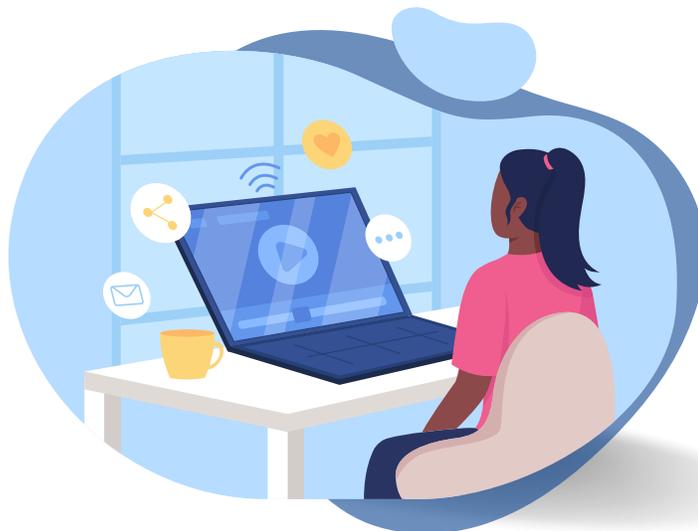
RACE AND HEALTH DATA COLLECTION PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

Facilitators are HAAC Members and Friends of HAAC

All sessions will run from 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

SESSION	LOCATION	FACILITATORS
Launch Session: November 17, 2021	HRM- Black Cultural Centre	Sharon Davis Murdoch
November 25, 2021	HRM- Natural History Museum	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 860 2388 1182</u> <u>Passcode: 811473</u>
November 29, 2021	HRM- Halifax Central Library (Lindsay Children's Room)	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 882 5654 6677</u> <u>Passcode: 571781</u>
December 3, 2021	HRM- North Preston Community Centre	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 834 9299 3971</u> <u>Passcode: 621485</u>
December 8, 2021	HRM- Hammonds Plains Community Centre	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 838 9281 8353</u> <u>Passcode: 977259</u>
January 23, 2022	HRM- TBD	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 814 8920 8763</u> <u>Passcode: 638749</u>
February 4, 2022	Sydney- TBD	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 814 0785 4208</u> <u>Passcode: 519587</u>
February 11, 2022	Truro- Fire Hall	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 882 0826 8525</u> <u>Passcode: 995829</u>
February 17, 2022	East Preston- Fire Hall	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 851 2874 9785</u> <u>Passcode: 214932</u>

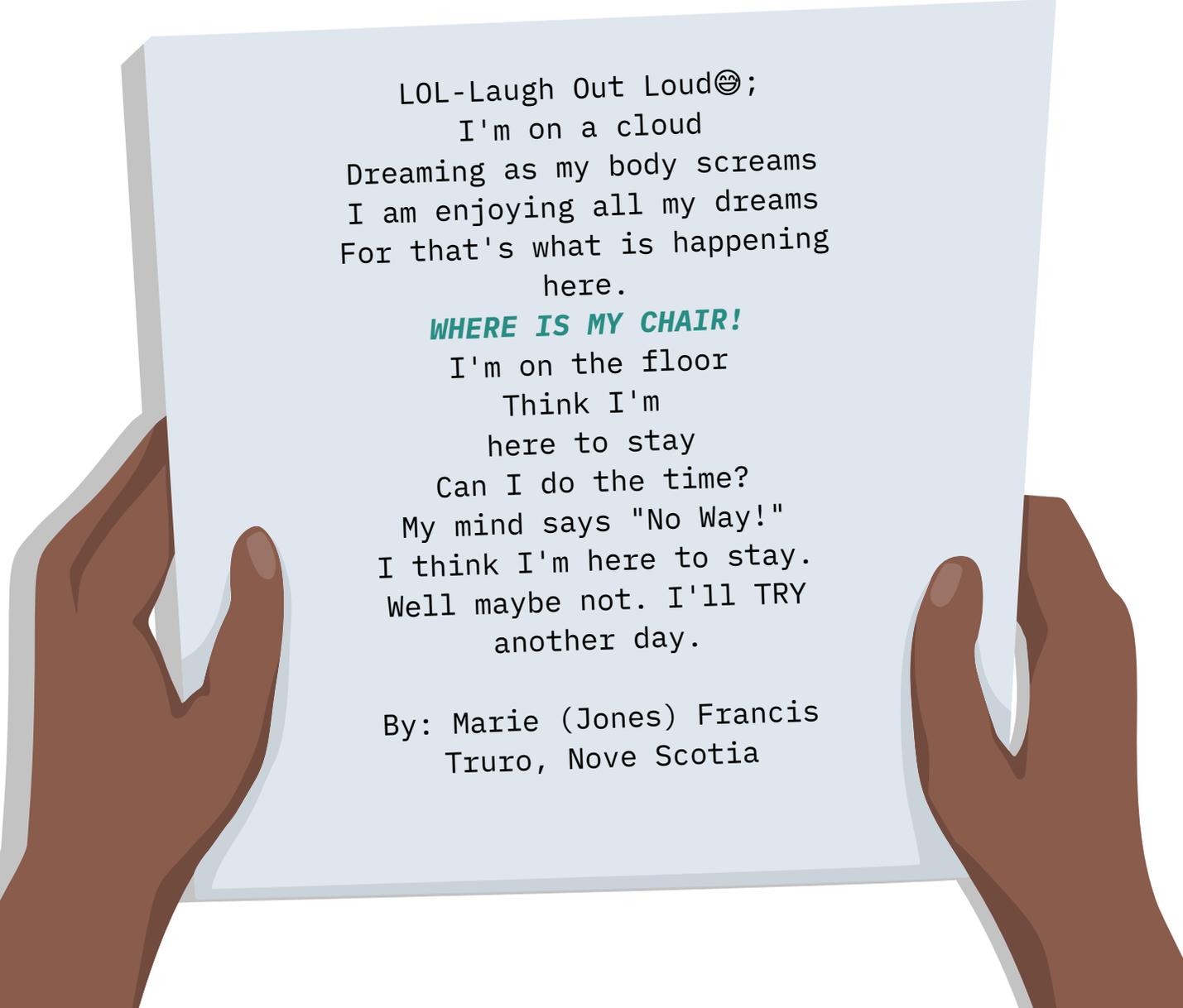
SESSION	LOCATION	FACILITATORS
March 4, 2022	Guysborough-TBD	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 821 8432 5594</u> <u>Passcode: 658815</u>
March 18, 2022	Yarmouth-TBD	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 898 0032 1762</u> <u>Passcode: 460857</u>
March 25, 2022	Digby-TBD	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 825 6950 2773</u> <u>Passcode: 360132</u>
March 30, 2022	New Glasgow-Ward One Community Centre	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 820 7686 3758</u> <u>Passcode: 858796</u>
April 1, 2022	Amherst-TBD	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 874 4672 4001</u> <u>Passcode: 252761</u>
Wrap Up Session April 7, 2022	HRM-Black Cultural Centre	<u>Zoom</u> <u>Meeting ID: 864 1610 8436</u> <u>Passcode: 117022</u>



SENIORS HEALTH AND COMPUTER SESSIONS

The Seniors Health and Computer Sessions are very successful and we will be seeking new participants in the new year. Please ensure you advise your Community Coordinator if you are interested in taking part.

Below is a poem that was written by one of the seniors who participated in the Yoga sessions:



LOL-Laugh Out Loud 😊;
I'm on a cloud
Dreaming as my body screams
I am enjoying all my dreams
For that's what is happening
here.

WHERE IS MY CHAIR!

I'm on the floor
Think I'm
here to stay
Can I do the time?
My mind says "No Way!"
I think I'm here to stay.
Well maybe not. I'll TRY
another day.

By: Marie (Jones) Francis
Truro, Nove Scotia

COVID-19 RESEARCH UPDATES

A Culturally Specific COVID-19 Response Strategy for ANS in the Prestons

Researchers: Dr. Ingrid Waldron & Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch

Survey research on clinical services, health promotion and the collection of disaggregated race-based health data and how it can improve access to COVID-19 testing and health services was completed earlier this year. We are currently completing individual interviews with Preston participants and hope to complete these before the end of the year. Early in the new year, we will begin data analysis, after which we will write a final report on study findings.

Don't Count Us Out! Community informed approach to health promotion for African Nova Scotian communities - Researcher: Dr. OmiSoore Dryden.

Don't Count Us Out is a research project interested in measuring how social conditions, including systemic issues, impact the experiences of COVID-19 within the African Nova Scotian community of the Preston Township. We are particularly interested in access to testing, health services and treatment, as well as the levels of trust community members, have with public health during this time.

We have completed all initial surveys and are still in the process of collecting health card information from participants. We are not seeking the personal information of individuals. The health card numbers help us to identify a broad overview of the entire community. We will be having open public community meetings to discuss this part of the research in more detail and answer any questions community members may have. For more information, please contact Dr. OmiSoore Dryden, the principal investigator at OmiSoore.Dryden@dal.ca.

"Identifying Culturally Responsive Health Care Principles to Support ANS who Experience Family Violence: Lessons Learned from COVID-19"

Researchers: Senator Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard & Nancy Ross

The project was about providing culturally responsive care to African Nova Scotians seeking health and social services in response to gender-based violence. 196 survey responses were completed and over forty people in individual interviews and Kitchen Table Talks. One of the tools used to disseminate the research findings in the development of three short film clips. Filmmaker Juanita Peters has been hired to produce these film clips and this work is in the process as we continue to analyze the data. The project end date has been extended to March 31, 2022.

NEW COVID-19 VACCINE RELATED PROJECTS

Encouraging Vaccine Confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine for African Nova Scotian/Black children and youth

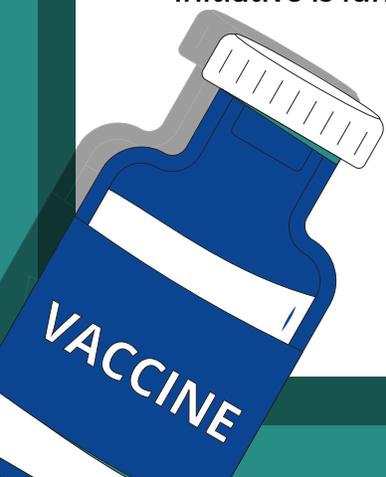
The goal and objective of this project are to provide culturally specific hands-on activities and educational resources about viruses and vaccination for African Nova Scotian/Black children and youth (Grades 4 to 12). The partners in this project are the Imhotep's Legacy Academy (ILA), Promoting Leadership in health for African Nova Scotians (PLANS), the Health Association of African Canadians (HAAC) and the Canadian Center for Vaccinology (CCfV). The research project commenced in May 2021 and will conclude in January 2022 and is funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC).

Immunization Partnership Fund (IPF): Improving COVID-19 Vaccination Service for African Nova Scotians

The goals and objectives of the IPF are to:

- Provide culturally responsive community-based information about COVID-19 vaccination for African Nova Scotians
- Ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccination for African Nova Scotians

The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), Nova Scotia Health (NSH), the Health Association of African Canadians (HAAC), the Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW), and the Canadian Center for Vaccinology (CCfV) are all partners on this project which commenced Sept. 1, 2021, and concludes March 31, 2023. This initiative is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).





STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING PAIN FROM SHOTS

Did you know **2 in every 3 children** and **1 in every 4 adults** have a fear of needles?

Advice from Pandemic Parenting Podcast guest expert, **Dr. Christine Chambers**

1 APPLY NUMBING CREAM

Apply a numbing cream 30-90 minutes before getting a shot.

2 HAVE DISTRACTIONS

Bring activities or devices that will distract away from the shot.

3 DO RELAXATION EXERCISES

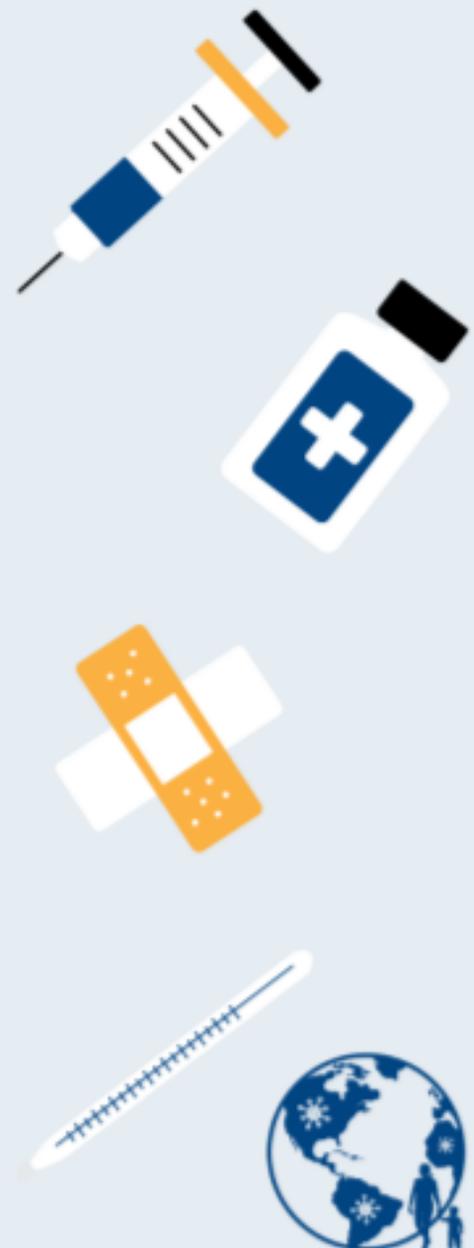
Make sure the recipient is relaxed. Try a breathing exercise or encourage kids to tense their muscles like a robot and then let them loose like spaghetti noodles.

4 SIT UPRIGHT

Have older children sit up instead of lying down.

5 IF BREASTFEEDING, NURSE DURING SHOTS

If you're breastfeeding, nurse infants while they receive their shots. Breastfeeding has been shown to significantly reduce pain from needles for infants.



PANDEMIC PARENTING

COMMUNITY COORDINATORS

ABSW recruited and positioned Community Coordinators around the province who provide timely information on the various community needs.

The Community Coordinator leads are below.

LEAD	AREA
Archy Beals	North Preston
Andrew Howe	East Preston
Sherry Bernard	CherryBrook/Lake Loon
Gina Jones	Upper Hammonds Plains
Cheryll Cromwell	Halifax
Maxine Farmer	Dartmouth
Kathy Rhondes Langille	Guysbrough, Sunnyville, Monastery, Lincolnville, Tracadie, Canso & Antigonish
Crystal States	New Glasgow
Jo-Anne Jordan	Truro
Lisa Diggs	Kentville, Windsor, Greenwood & Bridgetown
Barbara Roberts	Digby
Troy Lawrence	Yarmouth
Vanessa Hartling	Shelburne & Birchtown
Charles Sheppard	Cape Breton
Holly Martin	Amherst
Vernon Simms	Bridgewater

Association of Black Social Workers



BLACK COMMUNITY SUPPORT LINE

1-855-732-1253

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS? DO YOU NEED
HELP? WE'RE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU.

The Black Community Support Line is here to provide resources, supports and navigation to those of African descent across Nova Scotia. Calls are serviced through voicemail and messages will be returned within 12 hours.

CALL TOLL FREE 1-855-732-1253
Province Wide
or
Email: SUPPORT@NSABSW.CA

