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New tools to reduce COVID-19 Vaccination anxiety

A new series of social scripts designed to reduce anxiety and assist autistic people getting a COVID-19 vaccination has today been released by autism peak body Amaze, in partnership with National Disability Services (NDS).

Autistic people may find the process of getting vaccinated against COVID-19 stressful. Attending a mass vaccination centre or GP for a COVID-19 vaccination is a new and potentially daunting experience, which may induce feelings of anxiety.

Social scripts are story-based strategies using images and descriptions to explain new experiences and social environments to autistic people.

The scripts have been designed to reduce uncertainty about getting the vaccine by clearly stepping out the process. This will make it easier to get vaccinated.

The scripts, which are the first of their kind in Australia, have been developed for autistic people with input from autistic people. However, CEO of Amaze, Jim Mullan said anyone who is feeling uncertain about the process of getting a COVID-19 vaccination can use and benefit from these resources.

“Giving autistic people the opportunity to prepare themselves for the vaccination process is extremely important.

“We developed these scripts to reduce anxiety for autistic people. The scripts are designed as a guide for autistic people to get vaccinated, allowing them to feel more comfortable with the process and preparing them for what they should expect,” he said.

“New environments and situations can be challenging for many autistic people. We want to make that process less daunting, more inclusive and more accessible,” he said.

Willow Metcalf, who assisted in creating the resource, said social scripts can be incredibly important for autistic people entering new situations.

“As an autistic person, entering a new environment like a mass vaccination hub can be extremely overwhelming.

“Just having the opportunity to read the script and see pictures of what it will be like, can make the process so much easier,” she said.

The scripts will also help vaccine providers, both GPs and vaccination hubs, to provide a more accessible environment.



“It’s important we ensure autistic people are able to get vaccinated as soon as they can.

“Many in our community are eligible for priority vaccinations and we hope the scripts will provide them with the confidence to go ahead and get vaccinated,” said Mr Mullan.

More than 15,000 extra open vaccination appointments have been set aside for prioritised groups in Victoria.

The social scripts can be found at www.amaze.org.au/socialscripts or through contacting the Autism Connect national helpline on 1300 308 699 to speak to an autism advisor.

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About Amaze

Amaze is a peak body for autistic people and their families, developing and delivering vital information and support to the autistic community for over 53 years.

Amaze builds understanding, engagement and acceptance of autism, and influences positive systemic change to enable autistic people and their families to participate and contribute to society.

Key to Amaze’s efforts in increasing acceptance, understanding and inclusion of autism and the community supports available is Amaze’s Autism Connect: Australia’s national autism helpline.