



JOIN OUR FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 HEALTH MISINFORMATION

THE SITUATION

Over the last year, health information has been politicized and misrepresented to the detriment of Americans fighting to remain safe in extraordinary times. As Pennsylvania began turning the corner on COVID-19 by late June, reaching key milestones that allowed for the lifting of restrictions, a perfect storm was brewing. Health misinformation worsened, those vulnerable to such misinformation declined vaccinations, and the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus spread to unvaccinated populations. Today, we're seeing higher rates of infection, hospitalization and death than one month ago.

Misinformation not only imperils public health efforts, but those who decline vaccinations can easily become sources of the next coronavirus variants, risking the lives of those around them, as well as anyone who cannot be vaccinated – like children. For these reasons, we all have an ethical obligation to identify and stop the spread of misinformation.

CALL TO ACTION

On July 15, 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an Advisory for individuals and organizations to join a nationwide effort to confront the urgent threat of health misinformation. To this end, we invite you to join us in committing to and promoting five simple and actionable steps, outlined below:

1. ASK A PROFESSIONAL, NOT THE INTERNET.

Medical professionals are the best source for accurate health information and the latest developments. Their advice is backed by licensure, certification, years of schooling and on-the-job training.

2. BEFORE SHARING, VERIFY.

When online, validate the accuracy of information against trustworthy and credible sources, such as the CDC, U.S. Department of Health, and World Health Organization. If you cannot verify, do not share.

3. REPORT HEALTH MISINFORMATION TO SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.

If you see health information you believe to be false or misleading, report it to the hosting platform (i.e., YouTube, Facebook, Twitter). Only then, can we begin to change the algorithms that determine what we see online, and eventually reduce exposure to misinformation.

4. REFRESH SECURITY AWARENESS TRAINING.

The COVID-19 pandemic has given cyber criminals new opportunities for waging disinformation attacks and influence campaigns. Review and refresh your organization's security awareness training to ensure it helps employees recognize and weed out disinformation.

5. COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS.

Employers play an essential role in protecting our workers and businesses from forces that could disrupt operations. Establish clear expectations that discourage the spread of misinformation and share them with your internal and external stakeholders (i.e., employees, vendors, elected officials).

What's the difference between misinformation and disinformation?

The key difference is intent. Misinformation is false information that is spread regardless of intent to mislead. Disinformation is deliberately misleading or spreading misinformation.

Thank you, in advance, for your support of these simple, but, effective, measures!

Kick COVID-19 Community Corps is a collaborative between Lackawanna County, the City of Scranton, local healthcare providers, social service agencies, faith groups, cultural organizations, economic and educational institutions, and volunteers. Our mission is to stop the spread of COVID-19 through a grassroots campaign that educates, informs, and motivates the region's most vulnerable populations to be vaccinated and encourages meaningful acts of service. Kick COVID is a member of HHS Community Corps.

