

**Subject line: disABILITYsa Facilitates the VaxabilitySTRONG COVID-19 Vaccine Education & Outreach Initiative**

**Press release:**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DISABILITYSA FACILITATES THE VAXABILITYSTRONG  
COVID-19 VACCINE EDUCATION & OUTREACH INITIATIVE**

**Jan. 12, 2022 -- SAN ANTONIO --** Through funding from Texas A&M Health and the State of Texas Department of Health and Human Services, **disABILITYsa** is implementing the **VaxabilitySTRONG** COVID-19 Vaccine Education and Outreach program within the San Antonio disability community. The program will serve as a part of state-wide efforts by the Texas Department of State Health Services to ensure most vulnerable populations in Texas communities have the information and resources needed to understand, access, and receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

In early December 2021, the Texas Department of State Health Services, in partnership with the Texas A&M University Health Science Center, awarded more than \$8.6 million to local organizations across the state through the Texas Vaccine Outreach and Education Grant Program. The program's objective is to fund COVID-19 outreach and education activities aimed at increasing the number of fully vaccinated people in Texas.

disABILITYsa's **VaxabilitySTRONG** program is a recipient of this statewide COVID-19 vaccination initiative and will serve as a multifaceted information, education, and community campaign to inform those who still have hesitations about receiving a vaccine about the safety and benefits of the COVID-19 vaccines and encourage them to become fully vaccinated. Additionally, the program serves to address vaccine access issues, identifies current vaccination sites with accommodations, and coordinates with vaccine providers to provide accessible clinics with additional support to increase vaccination rates in our community.

Currently one in every seven individuals in San Antonio lives with a disability, a community population to which the program will target reaching through community conversations and educational workshops about COVID-19 vaccines. disABILITYsa will refer people to a list of disability-friendly vaccine providers, and conduct the community-wide visibility campaign, **VaxabilitySTRONG**, featuring vaccine champions from the disability community.

"In helping to facilitate this statewide program at a local level, it is our goal to bring the program resources to our network to ensure the San Antonio disability community has the information needed to

access and make knowledgeable decisions about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine,” said Melanie Cawthon, disABILITYsa Co-Founder/Executive Director. “We hope other community groups will join us in our efforts to make our entire community **VaxabilitySTRONG, increasing the number of people living with disabilities who are fully vaccinated for COVID-19.**”

Below is a description of each component of the **VaxabilitySTRONG** program with program resources and activities available to any service or community organizations who wish to partner in the program to reach out to those living with disabilities in their networks:

- **Information and Materials Distribution**  
disABILITYsa’s **VaxabilitySTRONG website**, <https://www.disabilitysa.org/vax-ability.html>, provides a listing education workshops and vaccination clinic sites that are accessible to the disability community. Additionally, program resources, such as print materials and videos, are accessible for use by anyone who wishes to find more information about the Covid-19 vaccine, many available in English, Spanish, and ASL. Resources are provided in various communication formats to ensure this important information is available to everyone.
- **Community Conversation Education Session**  
In collaboration with program partners and local health officials, disABILITYsa staff will facilitate community conversations and educational workshops, both in-person and in virtual format, on the COVID-19 vaccine, addressing concerns that create hesitancy in people to receive a vaccine. Materials and communication conduits will be designed to most effectively bring information to those in the disability community; and information of vaccination sites and clinics where additional supports are available will be provided.
- **Vaccination Clinic Access**  
disABILITYsa is coordinating with San Antonio Metro Health to bring vaccination clinics where additional supports are available on-site to locations where access is needed.

**For more information or join in this effort, please contact:**

Melanie Cawthon, disABILITYsa Co-Founder/Executive Director or Annette Paulin, VaxabilitySTRONG Program Manager, at [vaxabilitystrong@disabilitysa.org](mailto:vaxabilitystrong@disabilitysa.org). Call O: 210-704-7262 / C: 210-343-2462.

**For more information about the DSHS and Texas A&M Health announcement, visit:**

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news/releases/2021/20211215.aspx>

*(News Media Contact: [pressofficer@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:pressofficer@dshs.texas.gov))*

**About disABILITYsa**

Established in 2016, disABILITYsa is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization working to educate, advance and engage individuals living with disabilities by sharing information, creating opportunities, and strengthening the disability service organizations in San Antonio.

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