



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
Friday, January 22, 2021

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## **Flood of Frustration in Scheduling COVID Vaccines: Nearly 3,000 AARP On Line Activists' Stories in 24+ Hours**

### *Majority Unable to Obtain Appointments Despite Computer Proficiency*

**ALBANY, N.Y.**— Nearly 3,000 AARP on line activists from across New York State shared personal stories about their experiences trying to schedule a COVID vaccine this week in just over a 24-hour period from yesterday to today in response to an email survey.

The vast majority of the 2,892 respondents expressed frustration in their attempts, made via phone and the internet.

The flood of frustration comes as about seven million New Yorkers, including those 65 and over as well as certain front-line workers and those with compromised immune systems, are eligible for a supply of at most 300,000 vaccines a week.

Aware of the frustration among its members and many others earlier this month as well as the limited supply, AARP New York urged Governor Andrew Cuomo by [letter](#) to improve the process by which eligible New Yorkers can at least get in line to schedule appointments.

The State has made improvements, including a significant reduction in the waiting time for those calling New York's toll-free number (1-833-NYS-4-VAX, or [1-833-697-4829](tel:1-833-697-4829)) to schedule vaccination appointments.

Still, nearly 60% said they were unable to schedule an appointment after attempting, with many saying the State website (<https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>) had no appointments available, facilities to receive the vaccine were too far away, or providers had cancelled their appointments.

Some New Yorkers of color also indicated that race played a role in their difficulty in scheduling an appointment.

On line activists expressed a variety of frustrations with the process in responding to the informal AARP New York survey. Here are excerpts from some of their stories:

*“This has been totally useless. My wife and I have called all of the local hospitals and asked how and when we can get the shots. They all (3) told us they do not have the vaccine and are not scheduling appointments. They said when ‘NY decides to give it to us, we will start giving it out.’”*

- Warwick

*“My wife and I are only 62 years old. However, we each suffer from autoimmune diseases. Yet when trying to make an appointment it doesn't address any existing medical conditions, only age. For that matter there are no available appointments anyway that we could find on the Long Island locations.”*

- Oakdale

*“On the website there are no appointments available in my local area. By phone Moderna was available but I'm afraid to take Moderna because of the side effects. I do not want to take the chance with my ailments. My mom and my brother took Pfizer and they didn't have side effects, so I feel more comfortable with taking Pfizer, because our genetics are the same.”*

- Person of color in Bronx

*“I started trying to get an appointment day 1. In NYC had to fill out form which required my race and ethnicity. I was denied then informed that there were no appointments. I filled out the form again and said I was White and was able to get an appointment for February. Mysteriously 2 days later I received a text and an email informing me that my appointment had been cancelled because they had no vaccines for February. All my White friends and neighbors have been able to get an appointment. I don't understand why race is a factor in giving out appointments, especially when more Blacks and Hispanics are being affected by COVID-19.”*

- Person of color in New York City

*“I'm calling New York State. Request to complete a form with the personal details. Then they say that according to age, I am in the criterion of getting vaccinated, and then names and places appear where it is possible to get vaccinated, but an appointment has to be made. No phone number available. And no online site works. Ask for details again and then the screen freezes. This is my experience for the past two weeks.”*

- Oceanside

*“Have tried to find vaccine availability on NY vaccine website to no avail. The locations for vaccine accessibility in NY are very few and most of them miles away from our Western NY home. My husband is 75 and a school bus driver and a United States Army Reserves veteran. He is not eligible for veterans' benefits because he was 'active' for only 6 months but served for 6 years. We are willing to be patient and we are hopeful NY will come through with more vaccine sites.”*

- Victor

*“Impossible to reach any place to schedule an appointment. 83 years old and feel like I'm at the end of the list. Three people in my family have been trying to get me scheduled. Also, impossible.”*

- Woodmere

*“It took many tries sometimes the website froze, and sometimes it said there was an appointment but when choosing a time you could not. I finally made an appointment. It's a month away and 400 miles one way to the site from my home.”*

- Person of color in Ossining, NY

*“The sites listed do not have phone numbers. And in my zip code the ones that are listed keep you on the phone so long, so when they answer do not have any vaccine or I can go to another borough. But my hospital, Mt. Sinai, which is one bus stop away, has long lines of testing and I must say few of them from what I see on the line don't look like me. So how are these appointments being made for some and not others? I am 73, my sister is 79, and my brother is 70.”*

- Person of color in New York City

*“When I first tried, I couldn't log in; web site always said loading. When I finally logged in local supermarkets and pharmacies were not accepting appointments yet. The dome arena was filled; State Fairgrounds was accepting appointments, but only open dates were in April and it is 90 miles away. I'm 72 with a heart condition and hope either my personal doctor or the VA can get me in before that. In the meantime, I will keep trying at Wegmans and local pharmacies.”*

- Rochester

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*AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation's largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org) or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.*

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