



Jeff Zients

Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response and Counselor to the President-elect

Natalie Quillian

Deputy Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response

January 7, 2021

Dear Mr. Zients and Ms. Quillian:

Congratulations on your appointment as Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response. On behalf of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and its HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), we welcome the leadership and expertise you provide at this critical time, and we offer ourselves as resources to you. IDSA and HIVMA represent over 12,000 infectious diseases physicians, scientists, public health professionals and other clinicians on the front lines of this pandemic. **We request a meeting with you or your staff to discuss how we can support your work and potentially amplify its reach through our leaders and members.** As you may know, we have met with the President-elect's COVID-19 Advisory Board and Transition Team members and appreciate the opportunity for ongoing collaboration in support of the transition and in strengthening the coronavirus pandemic response. We would like to provide our expertise and support to you as well.

We share the President- and Vice President-elect's vision of an evidence-based, nationally coordinated pandemic response informed by health experts. We also support the pillars of his plan to overcome COVID-19, including distributing vaccines and treatments in an equitable and effective manner, encouraging mask use nationwide, strengthening our testing capacity, ensuring adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and other medical supplies, providing science-based guidance for community mitigation measures, addressing health disparities and enhancing our preparedness for the inevitable future health threats. We offer you our members' diverse and extensive frontline expertise as you work to develop and implement strategies to finally bring the COVID-19 pandemic under control. Our members are caring for patients with COVID-19, developing infection prevention and patient management protocols, leading multidisciplinary hospital teams, directing state and local health departments, developing treatment and diagnostic guidelines and conducting research to deepen our understanding of COVID-19 in order to inform the development of new tools for prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Supporting National Leadership on an Effective Vaccination Strategy

IDSAs members have been deeply engaged in planning for and executing the distribution and administration of vaccines. Our members serve in leadership roles at the national and state levels, including on the Centers for Disease Control Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and have helped develop their individual state COVID-19 vaccination plans. We are disappointed that the U.S. is not yet meeting its COVID-19 vaccination goals and look forward to working with you to ensure widespread and equitable vaccine administration. We were heartened to hear that you and other senior advisors briefed President-elect Biden on Jan. 5 on plans to enhance and accelerate vaccination. We are also encouraged by the Jan. 6 announcement that CDC disbursed an initial \$3 billion to jurisdictions through the existing CDC Immunization and Vaccines for Children cooperative agreement. Leadership and resources are urgently needed for a variety of activities, including expanding staffing for planning and implementation, and working with health care providers, health care systems and workplaces to operate high-volume vaccination sites and ensure timely access to vaccines by eligible populations. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you to support successful vaccination efforts.

IDSAs, through our [COVID-19 Real-Time Learning Network](#), is maintaining a curated body of [resources](#) to educate and build COVID-19 vaccine confidence among the health care community. Funded in part by CDC, this network averages 201,000 page views per month and is growing in popularity, with nearly 100,000 pageviews in the week of Dec. 28 alone. We continue to organize webinars and podcasts to respond to questions from frontline clinicians and to disseminate the latest information on COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination strategies. We are also working with the Ad Council and the COVID Collaborative on broader public education efforts to understand [public attitudes](#) toward COVID-19 vaccination and to encourage vaccine uptake, in addition to hosting our own media briefings, which are regularly attended by national and regional media outlets across the country.

Promoting Universal Mask Use

IDSAs and HIVMA strongly support the President-elect and Vice President-elect's call for all governors to enact mask mandates and their personal encouragement that all Americans wear masks. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you to remove politics from mask wearing and bring about a culture change on their use so everyone in the country is empowered to wear masks for their health and to protect their loved ones. IDSAs has teamed up with the Ad Council for "Mask Up America," a public education campaign with ads appearing at colleges and universities, bars, restaurants, convenience stores, grocery and liquor stores and in other public gathering spots throughout the country. Online and social media ads are also appearing in donated media space nationwide. In partnership with the COVID Collaborative and the National Governors Association, we have launched a [toolkit](#) containing PSAs, social content, press guidance and more for governors to promote mask wearing in their states. Since March, the Ad Council's COVID-19 public service advertisements have generated 30 billion impressions, and 77% of American adults are aware of the Ad Council's COVID-19-related messaging.

IDSA and HIVMA have leveraged multiple communications platforms to successfully deliver evidence-based information to the health care community and the public. In addition to our regular media briefings with top tier media outlets, we are also producing podcasts, social media content and position statements and communications to national and state policymakers. We stand ready to amplify your messages and support efforts to ensure that clinicians and the American people receive the information they need to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Strengthening Testing Capacity

Increased access to reliable rapid diagnostics is critical to identify people earlier in the disease course for their own health and to prevent disease transmission. IDSA members have been leading efforts to improve diagnostics, address supply issues and develop [guidelines](#) for clinicians on the use of diagnostics.

Optimizing Therapeutics and the Clinical Trial Infrastructure

The pandemic requires urgent attention to reducing hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. Our members also have led efforts to develop evidence-based clinical recommendations and [guidelines](#) to inform the use of the therapeutic options available and to ensure their equitable distribution. We have also developed [recommendations](#) to help increase the data available to inform the use of COVID-19 therapeutics by improving the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) process and strengthening clinical trial infrastructure. We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate on this issue.

Public Health Data Transparency

To effectively guide our response at the national, state and local levels, we must do a better job of collecting and publicly reporting meaningful data, including COVID-19 data by race and ethnicity, hospital and ICU capacity, total number of tests and percent positive, hospitalizations and deaths. By placing the responsibility for the response back in the hands of public health and medical experts, we are confident that President-elect Biden will help restore public faith in comprehensive, transparent COVID-19 data reporting.

Racial Equity and Health Disparities

While the intersection of racial inequities and health disparities has been brutally exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, our members have long recognized and [worked to address](#) these issues through our work on the front lines of the HIV epidemic. We commend President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris for making racial equity one of their top transition priorities as attention to this issue is critical to enhancing the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response and to the health of our nation.

To further assist you, IDSA and HIVMA encourage you to visit our [COVID-19 Real-Time Learning Network](#). We have also developed [policy recommendations](#) for individual HHS agencies and offices for the COVID-19 response and other infectious diseases priorities.


Thank you for your commitment to lead our nation out of this pandemic. We look forward to meeting with you, providing our perspectives and expertise, and supporting you in any way we

can in order to address the challenge of this public health emergency. Please feel free to contact us anytime through Amanda Jezek, IDSA's Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Government Relations, at ajezek@idsociety.org and Andrea Weddle, HIVMA's Executive Director, at aweddle@hivma.org.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Barbara D. Alexander in black ink.

Barbara D. Alexander, MD, MHS, FIDSA
IDSA President

Handwritten signature of Rajesh T. Gandhi in black ink.

Rajesh T. Gandhi, MD, FIDSA
HIVMA Chair