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Nation's Vaccine Reaction Reporting System Is Under Attack

Summary by Cindy Olmstead

The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) was put in place in 1986 in conjunction with the passage of the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act.

Initially, VAERS was intended to give vaccine-injured persons a forum for recording any side effects they had after receiving a vaccine, and to help health experts monitor reports of suspected vaccine reactions when a new vaccine rolled out. It's been "an effective tool," according to experts interviewed by The Poynter Institute's Politifact, but some feel the system also is being manipulated by fringe groups bent on casting doubts on vaccine safety, especially the COVID vaccines.

The system is public and anyone can make a report to it — one reason critics say what is in VAERS not only doesn't always accurately reflect true adverse reactions, but shouldn't be trusted. Most notably, the system has come under attack as thousands of adverse events have been reported in connection with COVID-19 vaccines.

The CDC runs VAERS and the system "has been critically important" for 30 years for the collection of data, Politifact says, but now it's "fertile ground for vaccine misinformation that spreads widely on social media" in connection with the COVID vaccine.

The volume of adverse reaction reports on the COVID vaccines "dwarfs" other categories, serving to "amplify fears" of the vaccines, Politifact says. But instead of addressing the numbers, Politifact simply brushes the reports off, saying "anti-

vaccine groups and activists" are filling the system up with "unverified, incomplete numbers to advance far-reaching claims."

SOURCE: **Politifact May 3, 2021**