

Pennsylvania COVID-19 Vaccination Plan Executive Summary

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pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Executive Summary

Immunization with a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is a critical component of the United States' strategy to reduce COVID-19-related illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths and to help restore societal functioning. The goal of the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is to have enough COVID-19 vaccine for all people in the state who wish to be vaccinated. Early in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program, there will likely be a limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine, and anticipated vaccination efforts will focus on those critical to the response, providing direct care, and maintaining societal function, as well as those at highest risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19.

This document serves as an overview of the distribution and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine. Utilizing the public and private partnerships established in the commonwealth will greatly increase the effectiveness of vaccine distribution. Through existing memoranda of agreement (MOAs) with pharmacies and the establishment of COVID-19 Provider Agreements, it is estimated that many residents will be in a reasonable proximity to sites providing COVID-19 vaccinations.

Critical Populations

Under the guidance of the CDC, DOH will be implementing a three-phased approach in its mass vaccination program. The department is anticipating an extremely limited number of doses in the beginning of its vaccination program, and as a result, will focus its efforts on Healthcare Personnel, First Responders, Critical Workers and individuals with high-risk conditions (Phase 1A). Once more vaccine becomes available, the department will expand its vaccine distribution to additional healthcare providers, people at higher risk and critical workers (Phase 1B). In Phase 2 of this plan, larger numbers of doses will be available and supply will likely meet demand; this phase will focus on those involved in broader healthcare administration, those with barriers to access to care, those contributing to the maintenance of core societal functions and those at elevated risk due to working or living conditions. Phase 3 will focus on the populations not identified in Phases 1 and 2. The department will utilize all available resources in identifying, estimating and locating COVID-19 critical populations. It's anticipated DOH will rely heavily on the CDC's Tiberius software in order to identify relevant data. DOH also plans to utilize Hospital Reports, Nursing Home Reports, Local Health Departments, Healthcare Coalitions and External Partners to identify more specific sub-population sets.

Vaccine Provider Enrollment

The department will utilize a three-phased recruiting and enrollment approach for vaccination providers. Phase 1 is currently under way and focuses on hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers, County and Municipal Health Departments, and DOH State Health Centers. Phases 2 and 3 will be expanded to existing Vaccines for Children (VFC) and non-VFC providers and pharmacies throughout the commonwealth.

Vaccine Storage and Handling

As part of the department's vaccine storage and handling site requirements, all providers will be required to complete the CDC's "You Call the Shots Storage and Handling" training. Ultra-Cold and Frozen Vaccine sites will be required to meet a list of handling requirements. Furthermore, the DOH Bureau of Communicable Diseases, Division of Immunizations, will require all sites to monitor vaccine storage temperatures and provide temperature logs with each COVID-19 vaccine order.

Vaccine Reminders

It is anticipated that most of the COVID-19 vaccines will require multiple doses to maximize vaccine effectiveness. DOH will incorporate several methods in order to provide second dose reminders to individuals who receive the initial COVID-19 vaccine dose. The department will use a registration and scheduling software to send confirmation and reminder messages to individuals who register for Vaccine Clinics. In conjunction with the registration and scheduling software, the PA Statewide Immunization and Information System (PA-SIIS) will track vaccines and provide second dose reminders. As part of the CDC COVID-19 vaccine ancillary supplies, Providers will receive COVID-19 vaccination record cards to complete and give to individuals who receive the COVID-19 vaccine. These cards will serve as vaccination record and a reminder as to when an individual will need their second dose. PADOH is also exploring phone call and postcard reminders.

Vaccine Communication

Clear communications is a key function to ensure the public is educated on the COVID-19 vaccine. The Office of Communications will be responsible for utilizing multiple mechanisms to provide vaccination updates to the public. It is anticipated that DOH will use press releases, news briefings, the department website and social media to ensure public confidence in the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccine Safety

As part of DOH's safety monitoring, the department will identify and report any Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs) to the CDC and FDA. COVID-19 Vaccine consumers will receive sheets with instructions on reporting ADRs. Each reporting entity in the state will be required to follow-up with consumers to determine the ADR outcome.

Vaccine Dashboard

DOH will utilize the CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Response Dashboard to estimate critical population categories, implement data into the administration of vaccine and record COVID-19 vaccine administration data. Metrics will be shared via DOH's existing COVID-19 Data Dashboard on the department's public website.