



## **FAQs and Resources on COVID-19 Vaccines and Issues Surrounding Vaccinations**

December 9, 2020

We have received numerous inquiries about potential vaccines for COVID-19 as well as operational and practical questions involving vaccinating employees and residents. Below are answers to frequently asked questions as well as a list of resources on COVID-19 vaccines and vaccinations. We will update these FAQs when more information becomes available.

### **VACCINE APPROVAL**

#### **When will a COVID-19 vaccine be available in the United States?**

According to the CDC, it is anticipated that the first supply of a vaccine will become available by the end of 2020. Although a vaccine may be authorized or approved, there will not be enough doses available for all adults. As supplies increase, it is anticipated that all adults should be able to get vaccinated sometime in 2021. A COVID-19 vaccine may not be available for young children, however, until more studies are completed.

### **PRIORITIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION**

#### **Who is making recommendations and determinations on the priority for COVID-19 vaccinations?**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is making coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination recommendations based on input from an Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). ACIP is a federal advisory committee made up of medical and public health experts who develop recommendations on the use of vaccines in the U.S. public. ACIP holds regular meetings, which are open to the public and provide opportunity for public comment.

After ACIP publishes its guidance and recommendations, it is then up to the states and their governors to determine the priority of vaccinations in their respective states.

States are working in real time to develop vaccination priorities anticipating a first round of vaccines doses in the coming weeks. Many have interim plans in place for vaccine allocation, and an initial analysis of these by LeadingAge finds that states are prioritizing long-term care residents and workers in their plans. The ACIP recommendations may help inform state plan refinements and/or continued prioritization of long-term care.

## **PHARMACY PARTNERSHIP FOR LONG-TERM CARE PROGRAM**

### **What is the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program?**

The Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care Program provides end-to-end management of the COVID-19 vaccination process, which includes cold chain management, on-site vaccinations, and fulfillment of reporting requirements, to facilitate safe vaccination of this patient population, while reducing burden on long-term care facilities and jurisdictional health departments. Long-term care facility staff members that have not received a COVID-19 vaccine can also be vaccinated as part of this program.

The pharmacy partnership program provides critical vaccination services and is free of charge to facilities. This effort will require extensive coordination with jurisdictions, long-term care communities, federal partners, including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and professional organizations, including LeadingAge and American Health Care Association (AHCA).

### **What facilities can participate in the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program?**

Long-term care facilities are eligible to participate in the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care Program, including skilled nursing facilities, nursing homes, assisted living facilities (residential long-term care facilities providing assistance and supervision to primarily elderly residents with activities of daily living and skills for independent living), and similar congregate living settings where most individuals receiving care/supervision are older than 65 years of age.

### **If our organization participates in the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program, are we responsible for certain costs?**

According to the CDC, there will be no cost to the facility for participation in the pharmacy partnership program. It is anticipated that participating pharmacies will bill public and private insurance for the vaccine administration fees.

### **Will the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program vaccinate staff, in addition to residents?**

Yes, the pharmacy partnership program can cover both residents and staff for the vaccinations when the pharmacies schedule their visits.

However, each state determines how to vaccinate health care workers, including long-term care workers, so follow your state public health agency and governor's office guidance to get more information on how to vaccinate your staff.

**Who is responsible for administering the vaccination and fulfilling the data reporting requirements of the vaccination program?**

The pharmacy partners will be responsible for administering the vaccine as well as for completing all of the data reporting requirements under the program.

**Are home health aides, hospice workers, and other caregivers working outside of a facility setting included in the pharmacy partnership program?**

Although these workers are considered healthcare workers, they are not part of the pharmacy partnership program. These workers should be addressed by the state priority plans, so stay tuned as more information becomes available in your state.

**Which vaccine is going to be distributed to organizations under the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program?**

Each state will determine which vaccine or vaccines are allocated to the pharmacy partnership program in their respective state.

**IMMUNIZING STAFF**

**Can employers mandate that employees get the COVID vaccine when available?**

Employers generally, and specifically health care providers, can require employees to get certain vaccinations as a condition of employment, but those mandates are subject to exceptions based on accommodations for disability or religious objections that might be available under state or federal law.

Even though employers might be able to mandate a vaccine for employees, employers may choose not to make vaccinations mandatory or use alternative methods for ensuring their employees get a vaccine once it becomes available. As this is a new virus and there may be multiple vaccines available, education will be critical for employers to assure their workforce is aware of the benefits of a vaccination.

If employers do mandate a vaccination for employees, they need to consider whether that impacts any potential worker's compensation or personal injury claim by an employee for claims resulting in adverse reactions to the vaccine.

Finally, unionized employers should look at any collective bargaining agreement in place to determine if that impacts any policy on vaccinations.

We will continue to monitor any federal guidance as vaccines are approved for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and if those approvals impact whether an employer can mandate vaccinations for staff.

**Are employers liable for any side effects or injuries that employees may suffer from the vaccine?**

As mentioned above, employers that mandate a COVID-19 vaccination for their employees might be subject to workers' compensation claims if the employee has an adverse reaction or is injured due to the vaccine.

For non-work related claims arising out of a COVID-19 vaccination, individuals may seek recovery under the [Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program \(CICP\)](#). This program is set up to address potential claims from the COVID-19 vaccine (and other "countermeasures" relative to various illnesses and pandemics). This is separate and distinct from the [National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program](#) that covers many childhood and the seasonal influenza vaccinations.

**Can we provide an incentive for employees to get the vaccine?**

Yes, you may offer an incentive if you institute a voluntary vaccination program and want to encourage staff members to get the vaccine.

**IMMUNIZING RESIDENTS**

**Does a resident or staff member need to sign a consent form to receive the vaccination?**

Yes, consent is required and will follow the guidance for on the emergency use authorization (EUA) accompanying the vaccine. There will also be a EUA fact sheet developed after each vaccine obtains EUA approval that will be given to each vaccine recipient outlining the risks and benefits of the vaccine. Residents (or their representative) and staff must see this document before signing the consent form.

The pharmacy partners will likely provide a consent form for use with residents and staff.

**Are nursing home residents required to get a COVID-19 vaccination?**

No. Under an EUA, the federal government cannot mandate that individuals get the vaccine. Residents or their representative can refuse the vaccine.

**If a person already had COVID-19, should they get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

According to the CDC, there is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again (natural

immunity). Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this phenomenon. Until a vaccine is available and ACIP makes recommendations to the CDC on how to best use COVID-19 vaccines, the CDC can't comment on whether people who had COVID-19 should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

## **COVID-19 RESOURCES**

### **Approval, Prioritization, and Distribution of the Vaccines**

[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 Vaccination](#)

[How CDC is Making COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations](#)

[Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#)

[CDC - Ensuring the Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines in the United States](#)

[Executive Summaries of State COVID-19 Vaccination Playbooks](#)

[Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program \(CICP\)](#)

[Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#)

### **Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program**

[CDC Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program for COVID-19 Vaccination](#)

[CVS/Omnicare COVID-19 Vaccine Resources](#)

[CVS COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Guide](#)

[CVS COVID-19 Vaccine Intake Consent Form](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Process Webinar Deck](#)

[Walgreens COVID-19 Vaccine Resources](#)

### **Education on the COVID-19 Vaccines**

[COVID-19 Vaccine Education and Equity Project](#)

[CDC - Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

[CDC: Answering Patient's Questions on Vaccines](#)

[Healthcare Professionals: Preparing for COVID-19 Vaccinations](#)