

## BACKGROUND

The Department of Health (Department) continues to receive questions from long-term care facilities, families with loved ones in long-term care facilities and other residential facilities, and other stakeholders regarding the vaccination of these groups within Phase 1A of the state's COVID-19 vaccination plan. The following Frequently Asked Questions document provides answers to many of those questions.

## PHARMACY PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONS

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

- The federal government established the [Federal Pharmacy Partnership \(FPP\)](#) program for long-term care and other residential facilities in order to help vaccinate one of the highest risk populations--persons who live and work in those facilities. This program will provide vaccine directly to the pharmacy partners who will handle all parts of the LTCF vaccination process.

### **When will the pharmacy partners begin vaccination?**

- The FPP will begin on December 28, 2020.

### **How do I know if I am part of the program with pharmacies?**

- Pennsylvania (for 66 counties) and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health have opted into the FPP with CVS/Walgreens. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health is receiving its own allocations of vaccine from the federal government and is operating separately from the Department.
- Vaccination through the FPP throughout the state will begin on December 28, 2020, with skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) receiving vaccinations first. Additional facility types may be covered under the FPP and will be receiving vaccinations after skilled nursing facilities, including personal care homes, assisted living facilities, private intermediate care facilities for individuals with developmental disabilities, community group homes, residential treatment facilities for adults, long-term structured residences, state veterans homes, state centers, private psychiatric hospitals, and Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs). The Department submitted a list of all licensed facilities in Pennsylvania meeting the definition of long-term care in the Interim Vaccination Plan. The Department is awaiting confirmation from the CDC that all of these facility types will be covered, and is working on an alternative vaccination plan if the CDC determines they are not.
- Of note, the federal government also [intends to partner broadly](#) with pharmacies, including CVS and Walgreens in future phases of vaccine distribution. That partnership will operate separately than the FPP.

### **How much notice will each facility receive for the dates of their vaccination clinics?**

- CVS and Walgreens have "vaccine leads" who will get prioritized facility lists and reach out to each facility. They will ask for a point of contact in the facility to coordinate vaccination planning such as setting a date, receiving additional information on bed count and employee count and aiding in answering questions. The facility will get a welcome email from its partner and then corresponding touch base calls throughout the process.

### **Is there a way to verify if a facility has opted into the program?**

- The Department has opted in all facilities meeting the definition of a long-term care facility in the Interim Vaccination Plan into the program. The CDC has confirmed that all SNFs in Pennsylvania are opted into the program; however, the Department has not yet received confirmation from the CDC for facilities other than

SNFs. The Department will update the FAQs once the CDC confirms which facilities will be participating. In case some facility types are excluded from the program, the Department is working on a process to share information with facilities that are not eligible for the FPP. The Department will be working through other means to vaccinate those who have not been partnered with the FPP. If a facility has a question about its enrollment, the facility should email [ra-dhccovidvax@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhccovidvax@pa.gov) or call 717-787-5681.

**If a facility already chose to work with CVS or Walgreens, can that facility change its preference now and instead partner with the other pharmacy (switching from CVS to Walgreens, or Walgreens to CVS)?**

- FPP enrollment has closed and the Department opted in all facilities meeting the definition of a long-term care facility. If a facility chooses to change its pharmacy partner, the facility should discuss this when CVS or Walgreens contacts the facility. If a facility has a question about its enrollment, the facility should email [ra-dhccovidvax@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhccovidvax@pa.gov) or call 717-787-5681.

**I have several different licenses within my overall facility. When will the FPP vaccinate residents and staff in each part of the facility?**

- CVS and Walgreens should be asked this question when the partnership entity reaches out to begin scheduling clinics.

**When will the FPP be sending the forms? Or reaching out?**

- CVS' and Walgreens' "vaccine leads" will reach out to each facility. They will ask for a point of contact in the facility to coordinate vaccination planning such as setting a date, receiving additional information on bed count and employee count and aiding in answering questions. The facility will get a welcome email from its partner and then corresponding touch-base calls throughout the process.
- CVS website: [www.omnicare.com/covid-19-vaccine-resource](http://www.omnicare.com/covid-19-vaccine-resource)
- Walgreens website: [www.walgreens.com/covidvaccine](http://www.walgreens.com/covidvaccine)

Please continue to check your junk or spam folders if you have not been contacted by a pharmacy.

**How will vaccine be provided moving forward after the FPP finishes their visits?**

- After the completion of the two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series, the facility will return to working with the vaccination provider it uses for routine vaccines.

**Can our FPP partner give us the vaccine to administer so we can stagger the vaccination process?**

- CVS and Walgreens will do all of the reporting, vaccinating, and second-dose administration. Vaccine cannot be given directly to a facility unless the facility is registered as a vaccine provider with the Department's Division of Immunizations.

**Will CVS and Walgreens have Epi Pens on hand in the event of an anaphylactic reaction?**

- Yes, the pharmacy partners will be prepared for a potential adverse event.

**How do we know which pharmacy will be giving us the vaccine?**

- Each facility was to select either CVS or Walgreens as its partner through the FPP. Recently enrolled facilities were given a partner based on location, and the department continues to work to enroll additional types of

facilities. Whoever the facility requested to partner with (CVS/Walgreens) will be in touch with the facility to set up their vaccine clinic.

- Some facilities selected that they have their own pharmacy partner to vaccinate their facility. If those facilities' pharmacy partner is unable to manage Pfizer vaccine, they need to contact the department (via the website below) so the department can either connect them with a CVS/Walgreens or make another arrangement for vaccination clinics.

**How will LTCFs that did not sign up for this program receive the vaccine? Many are part of Closed point of dispensing (POD) POD programs. Will health departments receive it and then distribute to those particular facilities?**

- The Department opted in all facilities meeting the definition of a long-term care facility in the Interim Vaccination Plan for the FPP. The Department is awaiting confirmation from the CDC on whether all facilities submitted by Pennsylvania are in fact enrolled in the program. If a facility was not included or is determined ineligible by the CDC, the Department is developing a process to get vaccine to these facilities and will be sharing more information on this soon. If a facility has a question about its enrollment, the facility should email [rahcovidvax@pa.gov](mailto:rahcovidvax@pa.gov) or call 717-787-5681.

**Is there a cost to my facility?**

- The program is free to facilities. The pharmacy partners will bill private insurance and government health care coverage for the vaccine administration fee.

## VACCINE ADMINISTRATION QUESTIONS

**Do you need a physician's order to give the vaccine? If so, can it be a standing order?**

- No, a physician's order is not necessary. To expand access to COVID-19 vaccines, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) authorized state-licensed pharmacists to order and administer COVID-19 vaccinations to patients age 3 and older.

**How long after someone had COVID-19 do they have to wait to get the vaccine?**

- Someone needs to be recovered from the virus to get the vaccine. From an epidemiology perspective, someone is recovered if they are 30 or more days post-virus, and no longer have any significant symptoms. Individuals who have had COVID-19 and have questions about vaccination should speak to their health care provider.

**If a resident is sick on the day of vaccination, is there a back-up date for them to receive it?**

- After the completion of the two-dose vaccination series, the facility can choose to continue working with its FPP partner that provided the initial on-site clinics or can choose to work with a pharmacy provider of its choice. Once the FPP partner completes the vaccination clinics at each site, it will then be vaccinating on an appointment basis. CVS and Walgreens will have more information on this.

**Is written consent needed? What if we have a resident who cannot provide consent, what do we need?**

- This will depend on the FPP partner. Walgreens will follow the facility's process and accept written or verbal consent. Consent may be from the individual themselves, their representative, durable power of attorney for health care, or legal guardian prior to immunization. For CVS, written consent using its vaccine consent form is preferred. However, verbal consent is allowed by a responsible party for residents who do not have physical or

cognitive ability to provide consent. <https://info.omnicare.com/rs/095-VIX-581/images/COVID%2019%20Vaccine%20Consent%20Process.pdf>

COVID-19 vaccination is not mandatory and individuals who do not give consent should not be vaccinated.

#### **Is vaccination mandatory? What happens if staff or a resident decline?**

- COVID-19 vaccine is not mandated by the Department for Pennsylvanians. An employer may choose to develop its own policy for employees.

#### **If someone contracts COVID-19 after receiving the first dose of vaccine, are we to continue with the second dose as scheduled?**

- No, you should not proceed with the second dose. The possibility of someone getting COVID-19 symptoms after receiving the vaccine is discussed in [PA HAN 542](#), Infection Prevention and Control Considerations for Residents of Long-term Care Facilities with Signs and Symptoms Following COVID-19 vaccination. At this time, the vaccine is recommended for persons who have sufficiently recovered from the virus.

#### **Can facilities begin sending the Vaccine Information Sheet (VIS) and consent to families now?**

- Yes, a facility can provide information to family members now. There is no VIS with the vaccine. Since the vaccines are under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), there is an EUA fact sheet. The EUA fact sheet for each vaccine is available at  
Pfizer-BioNTech: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download>  
Moderna: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144637/download>

#### **How long between the two injections?**

- The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is administered intramuscularly as a series of two doses (0.3 mL) each, three weeks apart.
- The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine is administered intramuscularly as a series of two doses (0.5 mL) each, 1 month apart.

#### **What severe allergic reactions are there concerns about? Other vaccines? Eggs? Foods? Penicillin?**

- For the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, [the CDC directed](#) anyone who has a history of anaphylaxis due to any cause should be observed for 30 minutes after vaccination.

#### **Do we still do COVID testing after the vaccine has been administered to staff and residents?**

- SNFs should continue the testing schedule from CMS testing memorandum [QSO-20-28-NH](#) until informed otherwise.

## VACCINATION PRIORITY (PHASES 1A OR 1B)

### **Are personal care homes phase 1A or phase 1B? Assisted living facilities? Residential treatment facilities caring for individuals who cannot care for themselves?**

- As part of Pennsylvania's interim vaccination plan, these facilities are all in Phase 1A.  
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Programs/Immunizations/Vaccine%20Plan%20V.3%20FINAL.pdf>.  
Vaccination through the FPP throughout the state will begin on December 28, 2020, with skilled nursing facilities first. Additional facility types may be covered under the FPP and will be vaccinated after skilled nursing facilities. These include personal care homes, assisted living facilities, private intermediate care facilities for individuals with developmental disabilities, community group homes, residential treatment facilities for adults, long-term structured residences, state veteran's homes, state centers, private psychiatric hospitals, and CCRCs.

## VACCINATION OF STAFF

### **Can staff be given the vaccines at different times just in case all staff become sick together?**

- [PA HAN 541](#) discusses infection prevent and control for healthcare personnel (HCP) with signs and symptoms of COVID-19 following COVID-19 vaccination. Based on available data, COVID-19 vaccination is expected to elicit systemic post-vaccination symptoms, such as fever, headache, and myalgias. While the incidence and timing of post-vaccination symptoms will be further informed by phase III clinical trial data, strategies are needed to mitigate possible HCP absenteeism and resulting personnel shortages due to the occurrence of these symptoms. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends staggering delivery of vaccine to HCP in facilities so personnel from a single department or unit are not all vaccinated at the same time. Based on greater reactogenicity observed following the second vaccine dose in phase I/II clinical trials, staggering considerations may be more important following the second dose.

### **How do we stagger staff vaccination since CVS or Walgreens is only coming three times?**

- Facilities should work with them through the FPP to determine this.

### **Where do home care agency staff and/or clients and/or home health fall?**

- Home care and home health are listed as "healthcare personnel" in Phase 1A of the Commonwealth's interim vaccine plan but are not included in the FPP. Pennsylvania will be working to vaccinate this population. Hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and pharmacy partners will be used to meet this population's need. More information will be issued soon as these partnerships are still being formalized.

### **Hospice staff?**

- As part of Pennsylvania's interim vaccination plan, hospice staff are "healthcare personnel" in Phase 1A.

## VACCINATION OUTSIDE OF FACILITIES

### **Like the flu shot, will the COVID vaccine be offered at hospital prior to discharge?**

- In Phase 1A, we are not vaccinating those hospitalized.



**How does a hospitalized long-term care resident get the second dose if they are discharged after the first dose is administered in their long-term care facility? How will the FPP be addressing those newly admitted after the clinics are completed?**

- After the initial phase of vaccinations, the facility can choose to continue working with the CVS or Walgreens partner that provided its initial on-site clinics or can choose to work with a pharmacy provider of its choice.

## LENGTH OF EFFECTIVENESS FOR VACCINE

**How long will the vaccine be effective?**

- The duration of protection is currently unknown for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine or for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

**Do we have to get it every year like the flu vaccination?**

- The duration of protection is currently unknown for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

## CAREGIVER QUESTIONS

**Are long-term care ombudsmen prioritized to receive the vaccine at the same time as DOH surveyors, DHS licensing representatives, and protective services staff?**

- Protective services staff and those ensuring the welfare of seniors are in Phase 1B as first responders.