

Virginia's COVID-19 Vaccination Priorities Announced

Health Care Personnel and Long-Term Care Facilities Will Receive Initial Vaccine Doses

(Richmond, Va.) — As COVID-19 cases continue to rise in Virginia, implementing a successful vaccination program is critical to flattening the curve and stopping the spread of this virus. Based on new information provided on December 3 by the federal government's Operation Warp Speed, Virginia is now preparing to receive an estimated total of 480,000 doses of vaccine from two manufacturers (Pfizer and Moderna) by the end of December 2020.

This initial distribution will ensure 480,000 health care personnel (HCP) and long-term care facility (LTCF) residents receive a first dose of the vaccine, beginning the inoculation process for nearly all members of Virginia's two top-priority groups, if we receive this expected allotment. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) estimates that there are up to 500,000 HCP and LTCF residents in Virginia.

"Vaccine will be provided to Virginians in a way that is fair, ethical, and transparent," said **Virginia State Health Commissioner M. Norman Oliver, M.D., M.A.** "We will focus initially on the groups that have been most at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 infections and those whose work puts them at greatest risk of contracting COVID-19 infections. Over time, as more vaccine supply becomes available, more Virginians will be able to get vaccinated, and we can look forward to a time when this pandemic will end."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' (ACIP) on Tuesday voted to formally recommend HCP and LTCF residents as top priorities for vaccination. In response, the Virginia Disaster Medical Advisory Committee (VDMAC) and the Virginia Unified Command voted this week to officially adopt ACIP recommendations in Virginia and provide initial vaccines to both HCP and LTCF residents.

The first shipment of vaccines is expected to be received from Pfizer in mid-December and will require ultracold storage (negative 70 degrees Celsius). All 72,150 initial doses will be distributed directly to geographically diverse health care systems with ultracold storage capacity, and will go to HCP. Health care personnel that directly care for COVID-19 patients will receive top priority among health care providers.

Subsequent weekly shipments are expected to begin after the initial shipment and will be divided among HCP and LTCF residents. The majority of LTCF in Virginia will receive vaccinations from CVS and Walgreens' teams onsite through a federal CDC-pharmacy-LTCF partnership. Health care systems and public health will ensure access to vaccination for all HCP and LTCF residents equitably across the entire state.

ACIP ethical principles for allocating initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccine, namely to maximize benefits and minimize harms, promote justice, and mitigate health inequities, support the early vaccination of HCP and LTCF residents. According to ACIP, as of December 1, 2020, approximately 245,000 COVID-19 cases and 858 COVID-19-associated deaths had been reported among U.S. HCP. Early protection of HCP is critical to preserve capacity to care for patients with COVID-19 or other illnesses. LTCF residents, because of their age, high rates of underlying medical conditions, and congregate living situation, are at high risk for infection and severe illness from COVID-19. As of November 15, 2020, approximately 500,000 COVID-19 cases and 70,000 associated deaths had been reported among residents of skilled nursing facilities in the United States.

Health care personnel are defined as paid and unpaid persons serving in health care settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials. Long-term care facility residents are defined as adults who reside in facilities that provide a variety of services, including medical and personal care, to persons who are unable to live independently.

The actual amount of vaccine received in Virginia is a moving target and dependent on when and how quickly vaccination doses are manufactured. VDH is coordinating future prioritization based on federal guidance.

Virginia COVID-19 Vaccination Prioritization Guidance

This guidance document was developed to plan for a COVID-19 vaccine distribution for the Commonwealth. The prioritization was developed to account for several planning assumptions: - The vaccine amount the Commonwealth receives is a scarce resource. - The Vaccination Prioritization Guidelines follow the recently released ACIP recommendations. - Healthcare Workers in Phase 1a is further defined to aid in allocation of scarce resources. - Facility types are included to help determine those at highest risk for treating suspected or know COVID-19 patients, those working in areas that serve high risk populations, and those working in areas that are deemed critically important to the continuity of the healthcare system. - Population estimates are included based on surveys conducted by facility type and to help plan for the Commonwealth's allocation.

Virginia Vaccination Prioritization Guidelines					
Phase 1a – Healthcare Workers and Long-Term Care Residents					
Healthcare Workers				LTC Residents and Staff	
				<small>*Note: Vaccinated through CMS/Pharmacy partnership</small>	
i.	Healthcare personnel who directly engage in the care of or interact with patients known or suspected of COVID-19, or who have direct exposure to potentially infectious materials from patients known or suspected to be infected with COVID-19.	Health Systems: 124,000 Residential Care facility staff (DBHDS, private psychiatric facilities, rehabilitation hospitals): 4,000 EMS: 27,000	169,500	Skilled nursing facilities Assisted Living Residential Care Communities Intermediate care facilities for individuals with developmental disabilities State Veterans Homes	158,000
ii.	Healthcare personnel who interact with patients at higher risk for infection due to the patients' individual risk factors but are not known or suspected to be infected with COVID-19 (dialysis, residential care facilities and EMS)	Dialysis: 10,000 DOC: 4,500			
iii.	All other employees in populations included in other employees and contracted personnel not otherwise vaccinated per the above categories whose duties may require access to clinical setting at health	Health Systems: 55,000 Residential Care Facilities (DBHDS, private psychiatric facilities,	70,000		

	system facilities or who are critical to the ongoing operations of health system facilities.	rehabilitation hospitals): 5,000 EMS: 10,000		
iv.	All other Healthcare Personnel who interact with patients not known or suspected to be infected with COVID-19.	Home Health & Hospice Ambulatory Surgery Centers FQHC Public health workers (patient facing) CSBs Primary Care Offices Dental Practices Pharmacies Other	43,000	
Phase 1b – Essential Workers				
Phase 1c – High Risk Adults				