

Based on new federal recommendations issued last week by the CDC Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the Department has updated and simplified the vaccine prioritization plan.

North Carolina's updated phases include:

- Current Phase - Phase 1a: Health care workers fighting COVID-19 & Long-Term Care staff and residents.
- Phase 1b (to begin in early January): Adults 75 years or older and frontline essential workers
- Phase 2: Adults at high risk for exposure and at increased risk of severe illness.
- Phase 3: Students
- Phase 4: Everyone who wants a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination.

Because currently there is not enough vaccine for everyone to be vaccinated at the same time, NCDHHS will open the next phase of vaccinations (1b) in groups, starting only with persons above the age of 75 in order to best manage vaccine dose availability. To see all the groups for Phases 1b and Phase 2 please review this [Infographic of Vaccine Phases](#).

In the coming days, we will be sending more information on how North Carolinians over age 75 will access vaccinations beginning in early January. For those who engage this population, please consider sharing our flyer ([English](#) / [Spanish](#)) as a first step.

All vaccine providers are expected to ensure that vaccine is equitably administered within each group. NCDHHS has a specific focus on building trust with historically marginalized populations. Longstanding and continuing racial and ethnic injustices in our health care system contribute to lack of trust in vaccines. The Department is partnering with trusted leaders and organizations to provide accurate information about the vaccine.

More detailed information is available at yourspotyourshot.nc.gov and in the resources below:

- Infographic of Vaccine Phases ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Deeper Dive: Phase 1a ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Deeper Dive: Phase 1b ([English](#) / Spanish Coming)

In addition, we encourage you to share vaccine resources below with your networks.

- Flyer on Vaccines ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Presentation COVID-Vaccination 101 ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Frequently Asked Questions ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Videos on Vaccine Rollout
 - o NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen shares information on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan ([45-second](#), [30-second](#))
 - o NCDHHS Deputy Secretary Ben Money shares information on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan ([link](#))
- Videos for Long-Term Care

- o North Carolina long-term care workers share their reason for taking the newly developed COVID-19 vaccine ([90-second](#), [60-second](#), [30-second](#))
- o NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen shares information on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan long-term care facility workers ([60-second](#))
- o NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen shares information on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan for families of long-term care residents ([link](#))
- o NCDHHS Deputy Secretary Ben Money shares information on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan for long-term care facilities ([60-second](#), [30-second](#))

We are regularly updating our web page. Continue to check the Vaccines page on the website for more information and resources as they are available: yourspotyourshot.nc.gov. The page is also available in Spanish: covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vacuna.

Thank you for your attention to this information! Please share with your networks and stakeholders. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions.

Hattie Gawande

Deputy Director of Government Affairs
NC Department of Health and Human Services



DEEPER DIVE: Phase 1a. Health care workers fighting COVID-19 & Long-Term Care

COVID-19 Vaccinations: Slow the spread and save lives.

A tested, safe and effective vaccine will be available to all who want it, but supplies will be limited at first. Independent state and federal public health advisory committees have determined that the best way to fight COVID-19 is to start first with vaccinations for those most at risk, reaching more people as the vaccine supply increases. Keep practicing the 3W's—wear a mask, wait six feet apart, wash your hands—until everyone has a chance to be vaccinated.

1a

Health care workers fighting COVID-19 & Long-Term Care



PHASE 1a: The goal is to protect the health care workers who care for patients with COVID-19, those working on the vaccination rollout, and North Carolinians who are at the highest risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19.

Health care workers at high risk for exposure to COVID-19 are defined as those:

- caring for patients with COVID-19
- working directly in areas where patients with COVID-19 are cared for, including staff responsible for cleaning, providing food service, and maintenance in those areas
- performing procedures on patients with COVID-19 that put them at risk, such as intubation, bronchoscopy, suctioning, invasive dental procedures, invasive specimen collection, and CPR
- handling people for who have died from COVID-19

Outpatient providers who have an increased risk of exposure beyond that of a typical general outpatient setting should be included in the Phase 1a. This could include outpatient providers who are focused on COVID-19 patient evaluation, respiratory care (e.g., respiratory diagnostic testing centers), members of a dedicated respiratory care team, or those frequently involved in COVID-19 testing sites. Outpatient dentists or dental hygienists are included in Phase 1a if they meet the above criteria for outpatient providers.

In addition, health care workers administering vaccine in initial mass vaccination clinics are part of this first phase.

The following types of people could meet this definition:

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| • behavioral health providers | • health care trainees (e.g., medical students, pharmacy students, nursing students) | • personal care aides |
| • community health workers | • home health workers | • pharmacists |
| • dental hygienists | • morticians/funeral home staff | • physicians |
| • dentists | • nurses | • public health and emergency preparedness workers |
| • EMT/paramedics | • nursing assistants | • public health nurses |
| • environmental services staff | | • respiratory techs |

How do health care workers in this first phase get their vaccine?

Due to very limited supplies, vaccines were available first through a small number of hospitals that were chosen based on bed capacity, health care workers, and county population. Additional hospitals and Local Health Departments have begun to receive vaccine in Week 2.

Local Health Departments, health care employers, hospitals and health systems all play a role in vaccinating health care workers in Phase 1a.

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS are compiling lists of health care providers who are not affiliated with a hospital or health system and who meet the requirements for Phase 1a. Local Health Departments will pre-register eligible health care workers in the state's COVID-19 Vaccination Management System (CVMS) or can register eligible individuals at the time of vaccination.

HEALTH CARE EMPLOYERS (e.g., medical practices, hospice providers, EMS) should determine which of their employees are at high risk for exposure to COVID-19—those that interact with or care for patients with COVID-19 or work in designated COVID-19 areas (e.g., cleaning). If they are not already working with their Local Health Department, health care employers should:

- Contact their local health department to submit their list of eligible health care workers in order to pre-register employees for vaccination.
- Understand that the ability for Local Health Departments to schedule appointments will depend on the supply of vaccine available.
- Know that Local Health Departments will prioritize vaccinations first for those with workers eligible for Phase 1a and based upon vaccine availability.

HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS are compiling lists of and pre-registering their employees and staff who are eligible for Phase 1a. They also can:

- Vaccinate non-employed or non-affiliated community-based health care workers who meet Phase 1a eligibility requirements.
- Work with the Local Health Department to coordinate access to vaccine for non-affiliated health care workers for those they pre-register.

LONG-TERM CARE STAFF AND RESIDENTS include people and staff in skilled nursing facilities and in adult, family and group homes:

- adult care homes
- family care homes
- group homes
- skilled nursing facilities
- group homes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who receive home or community-based services
- in-patient hospice facilities

How do long-term care staff and residents get their vaccine?

The federal government manages vaccinations for most staff and residents of long-term care facilities through the newly created Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program with CVS and Walgreens. Staff and residents will be vaccinated at the same time. Other long-term care staff and residents will receive vaccinations through their Local Health Departments and other long-term care pharmacies if not participating in the federal program. North Carolina is working to enroll other vaccinating providers who may also reach this population.



DEEPER DIVE: Phase 1b. Adults at highest risk of severe illness and those at highest risk for exposure

COVID-19 Vaccinations: Your best shot at stopping COVID-19

A tested, safe and effective vaccine will be available to all who want it, but supplies will be limited at first. To save lives and slow the spread of COVID-19, independent state and federal public health advisory committees recommend first protecting health care workers caring for patients with COVID-19, people who are at the highest risk of being hospitalized or dying, and those at high risk of exposure to COVID-19. Keep practicing the 3 W's—wear a mask, wait six feet apart, wash your hands—until everyone has a chance to get vaccinated.

Phase 1b: The goals are to save lives by protecting North Carolinians who are at high risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19 and slow the spread by protecting those at high risk of exposure.

Due to limited supply, phase 1b will not be open to everyone at first. Vaccinations will happen by group in the following order:

- **Group 1: Persons 75 years and older:** All people age 75 and older will be eligible to be vaccinated first in this group. There is no requirement to have certain qualifying chronic conditions.
- **Group 2: Any patient facing direct health care workers not vaccinated in Phase 1a and essential frontline workers and over age 50:** Patient facing direct health care workers are those directly caring for or working directly in areas where in-person patient care occurs. Essential frontline workers are defined by the CDC as workers who are in sectors essential to the functioning of society and who are substantially higher risk for exposure to COVID-19. There is no requirement to have certain qualifying chronic conditions.
- **Group 3: All other patient facing direct health care workers not vaccinated in Phase 1a and frontline essential workers of any age.** There is no requirement to have certain qualifying chronic conditions.

Patient facing direct health care workers includes any paid or unpaid health care workers with direct patient contact including, but not limited to:

- behavioral health providers
- community health workers
- dental hygienists
- dentists
- EMT/paramedics
- environmental services staff
- food services staff
- health care trainees (e.g., medical students, pharmacy students, nursing students)
- home health workers
- laboratory and phlebotomy staff
- nurses
- nursing aides and assistants
- nursing techs
- front desk administrative staff
- personal care aides
- Pharmacists
- Pharmacy techs
- physicians
- public health and emergency preparedness workers
- public health nurses
- respiratory techs

Frontline essential workers as defined by the CDC include these jobs:

- First responders (firefighters, police)
- Education (teachers, support staff, day care)
- Manufacturing
- Corrections workers
- Public transit workers
- Grocery store workers
- Food and agriculture
- US postal workers

North Carolina revised the prioritization for who qualifies for vaccination in Phase 1b from its original plan submitted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in October 2020 to more closely align with [new recommendations from the CDC](#) on vaccine allocation published on December 22, 2020.

COVID Vaccine discussions from Mgr and Clerks' Listservs:

I wanted to see if there is any specific information you are providing your employees to encourage them to take the COVID-19 vaccine. Any examples of such information would be very much appreciated. In addition, is anyone incentivizing vaccinations, such as by providing a day off or something else? **It doesn't sound like hardly anyone is mandating the vaccine**, so I am looking for examples of encouragement or incentives.

In McDowell County, health care providers have been vaccinating health care and emergency workers the past two weeks as part of Phase 1A of the COVID-19 vaccinations. **The percentage of eligible people taking the vaccine so far is well under 50%, which is very disappointing.** We want to do everything possible to encourage our employees to take the vaccine when they are eligible. Phase 1B vaccinations will start here next week, focusing on people 75 and older. Hopefully, that group will set a better example for everyone by taking the vaccine.

Just to put it out there, **we are considering offering days off for those who receive the vaccination. Possibly, one day for the first shot and two days for the second shot,** since it's supposed to be the one with side effects. Right now we're just talking about this concept, but wanted to see if anyone else was already using this incentive or another incentive.

YES!!!! WE are too. As of right now we have **4 out of 23 employees willing to get the shot!!!**

Since we have received notice that the Emergency Sick Leave has NOT been extended beyond December 31, 2020, are any of you doing a local COVID sick leave. If so, are you **linking the vaccination with the leave.** In other words, if you do not take the vaccine, you will not be granted the emergency leave?

In Lee County the Commissioners voted to Educate and Encourage but it **will not be mandatory for employees.**

We are planning to **suggest, but not require, folks take the vaccine.** Especially those in higher risk positions (water/sewer, for example). We will also ask **those who decline to sign a waiver stating it was offered (just like Hep A/B).**