**Interim Provider Guidance for Vaccinating North Carolinians**

**Summary Sheet of Updates**

**Updated January 27, 2021**

**Overview of North Carolina’s COVID-19 Vaccine Plan**

After months of planning, North Carolina began providing COVID-19 vaccinations on December 14, 2020. Our goal is to vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible given the limited supply of vaccines. North Carolina will move through vaccination phases by aligning with recommended priorities while empowering local health departments and hospitals with flexibility to move to the next priority group as they complete groups and have vaccine available. The broader, simplified prioritization groups should remove barriers to identifying eligible individuals.

**Prioritization Groups**

* Group 1 Health care workers and Long-term care staff and residents — ACTIVE
* Group 2 Older adults (defined as 65 and above) — ACTIVE
* Group 3 Frontline essential workers — NOT YET OPEN
* Group 4 Adults at high risk for exposure and increased risk of severe illness — NOT YET OPEN
* Group 5 Everyone who wants a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination — NOT YET OPEN

The goal of vaccinations in Group 1 is to protect health care workers who are a critical workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic and at risk for exposure to COVID-19 and North Carolinians who are at the highest risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19.  The goal of vaccination in Group 2 is to save lives by protecting North Carolinians who are at high risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19. When the state opens to Group 3, the goal of vaccination in Group 3 is to protect those at high risk of exposure to COVID-19.

**Key Updates**

* **Who is in Group 3**: New section on who is in Group 3, Frontline Essential Workers. The state has not opened vaccinations to Group 3 yet. Additional guidance on the timeline and how to vaccinate frontline essential workers will be forthcoming.
* **Best practices on scheduling**: New table with detailed best practices on scheduling vaccination appointments is in Section 6.2. Because of limited supply, vaccine providers are no longer encouraged to schedule appointments into the future beyond their current allocation and supply but rather use a waitlist to allow individuals to know they are “in line” and pull appointments from that waitlist for the following week as soon as you receive the allocation.
* **Best practices on promoting equity**: New table with more detailed best practices on promoting equity in vaccine distribution in Section 6.6. Approaches include meeting people where they are, prioritizing scheduling of HMP at vaccine clinics, partnering with health care providers serving HMP communities, earning trust by engaging with trusted leaders as vaccine ambassadors, and engaging in continuous evaluation and improvement to drive equitable implementation
* **Transportation assistance is now available**: Transportation can be a significant barrier in many communities. Ask every individual if they need assistance with arranging transportation. Coordinate with trusted partners, such as places of worship or community centers, to arrange for people to safely get people to and from vaccination appointments or reach out to your [local transit agency](https://www.ncdot.gov/divisions/public-transit/Documents/NC_public_transit.pdf). Local transit agencies serve all 100 North Carolina counties.
* **Updated information on weekly allocation cadence and documentation in CVMS**: As a top priority for the state continues to be distributing vaccine as quickly and equitably as possible, updated information on the weekly allocation cadence and documentation in CVMS are included in Section 6.2. All vaccine doses administered in North Carolina must be documented in CVMS. At this time, providers should fully enter administrations into CVMS *within 24 hours as often as possible* but must enter administration data within 72 hours of administration.
* **Best practices for community-based vaccination events** is included as a new Appendix 8.

**Other Important Reminders**

* **Proof of identification** is not required to schedule an appointment or to receive a vaccine. Individuals can self-attest to the criteria (e.g., age, job role, health status, living situation) that they qualify for in eligible priority groups.
* **No charge to patients/vaccine recipients** - To receive free supplies of the COVID-19 vaccine(s), vaccine providers must sign the provider agreement with the U.S. Government. Under the agreement, all providers must vaccinate individuals regardless of whether they have health insurance coverage or what type of coverage they have, and all providers are prohibited from balance billing or otherwise charging vaccine recipients.
* **Vaccinating outside jurisdiction** - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has instructed states that this is a federal vaccine bought with federal funding.  Hence, jurisdictions should not put restrictions on administering vaccinations to non-residents, if those persons meet the current eligibility criteria.  This applies to both county and state residency
* **Provider enrollment in CVMS:** In order to administer COVID-19 vaccine in North Carolina, providers must be enrolled in the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS). A complete listing of CVMS training materials are found on the [NC Immunization Branch website](https://immunize.nc.gov/providers/covid-19training.htm).  In order to directly receive vaccine for distribution providers must complete the Activation process in CVMS. Due to the number of providers who seek to receive and give vaccines, the department has established a priority list, beginning with the primary care workforce caring for adult patients and pharmacies and pediatrics following behind. The most important factor for rapid enrollment and activation in the CVMS system is timely submission and accuracy of content!