

Wisconsin COVID-19 Vaccine Talking Points Contents

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Key Messages for the Week (January 25)

- Through hard-work, collaboration, and adaptability, we at DHS and all our public health and health care partners have successfully built up the infrastructure and systems needed to vaccinate Wisconsinites. But without more vaccine doses allocated from the Federal Government, we are constrained in our efforts.
 - This means we have to prioritize who can get the vaccine.
 - Everyone will eventually have the opportunity to get vaccinated but while vaccine supply is limited, groups are prioritized based on risk of exposure to the virus and those more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection.
 - We can promise that once there is more vaccine available, we will be prepared to get more folks vaccinated.
- This week, we announced groups that will be eligible for vaccine tentatively beginning March 1. While we are excited to continue expanding eligibility for COVID-19 vaccine, we want to reiterate that vaccinating every eligible individual will take considerable time.
 - Our biggest priority is to get vaccine in the arms of as many Wisconsinites as possible. And we continue to prioritize the equitable, quick, and safe distribution of vaccine across the state.
- The good news is that Wisconsin has many tools available to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

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- If you are feeling ill or if you may have been exposed to someone that has tested positive for COVID-19, visit our [testing page](#) to learn the different ways you can get tested.
- Staying home, wearing a mask, good hand hygiene, and physical distancing will help protect yourself and your neighbors from the virus.
- Until you can get vaccinated, learn about ways that you can continue [making safe choices](#).
- The Wisconsin COVID-19 Vaccination program is the largest vaccination rollout in our state's history. While we expect some bumps in the road, our public health experts and partners across the state have extensive experience and knowledge with vaccine distribution and administration—and are working quickly and efficiently to ensure Wisconsin can overcome any obstacles.
- Due to the quickly evolving nature of the COVID-19 vaccination initiative, information may change or be updated frequently. We encourage our partners to visit our [COVID-19 vaccine webpage](#) for current information on eligibility, answers to the most frequently asked questions, vaccine data and key metrics, or to access resources related to vaccination efforts.
Vaccine Updates for the Week (January 25)
- The current COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Many people don't have any side effects after COVID-19 vaccines, but some people will have pain or swelling at the injection site or fever, chills, or a headache.
 - These typically don't last long and are signs that your body is building protection.
 - Both the Pfizer and Moderna are 95% effective—which means once you receive both doses, the vaccine has an excellent chance of keeping you healthy!

Vaccine Updates for the Week (January 25)

- DHS announced the next group that will be eligible for vaccinations tentatively beginning March 1. There will be options for where folks will get vaccinated including health care providers, pharmacies and local health departments. These groups are (in priority order):
 - Educators and child care
 - Individuals enrolled in Medicaid long-term care programs
 - Some public-facing essential workers like food supply, public transit, utility and communications infrastructure, and 911 operators
 - Non-frontline essential health care personnel
 - Staff and residents of congregate care facilities
- We are excited to see planning efforts go into effect as we continue to get more vaccine in the arms of Wisconsinites:
 - On-site vaccinations continue for assisted living facilities participating in the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program. Protecting some of Wisconsin's most vulnerable.
 - Vaccinations for individuals age 65 and older have begun.

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- Mobile vaccination teams are on the ground assisting local health departments with vaccination efforts.
- The Wisconsin COVID-19 Vaccination Program is a monumental undertaking and the largest vaccination effort in our state's recent history. But we have achieved many milestones in the past few months. As of January 25:
 - Almost 1,500 vaccine providers are fully registered with the State.
 - 362,803 vaccinations have been given.
 - 69,801 people have been completely vaccinated.
 - 884 vaccinating entities are administering vaccinations.
 - People in each of Wisconsin's 72 counties have been vaccinated.

Vaccine Allocation and Distribution Process

- The vaccine allocation and distribution process is complex.
 - The federal government allocates COVID-19 vaccine to Wisconsin based on population size.
 - Once the vaccine is allocated, Wisconsin places an order with the federal government so they know exactly where to send the vaccine.
 - Orders may not include the entire federal allocation due to limited storage space or to ensure hospitals and clinics are not overwhelmed with more doses than can safely be administered in a week.
 - For the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, doses are shipped first to regional hospitals (called hubs) before going on to locations where they will ultimately be administered.
 - Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is shipped directly to locations that will give vaccine.
 - Wisconsin is only being allocated 70,000-80,000 doses per week, and the amount of doses needed to vaccinate eligible populations is far more than what Wisconsin currently has.
- Many factors are considered when planning for distribution:
 - Scheduling of vaccination clinics to ensure the vaccine can be used in a timely manner and no vaccine will go to waste.
 - Scaling up staffing and infrastructure to safely and effectively administer vaccine.
 - Ensuring vaccinators can provide the 2nd dose within the recommended timeframe.
 - Planning ahead when federal vaccine allocations are given only a week ahead of time.
- For data about allocation, shipment, and administration of COVID-19 vaccines, visit our vaccine data dashboard.
 - <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/vaccine-data.htm>
 - Numbers are updated weekly on Tuesdays.

Vaccine Prioritization Decisions

Phased Approach Rationale

- Due to the limited amount of vaccine available, certain populations will be prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccine before others.
 - Those who are at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19.
 - Those who are at higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19 infection.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will be distributed to Wisconsin residents in a phased approach, this is important for a number of reasons:
 - **Vaccine supply is limited** and prioritized for certain populations.
 - **Ensure vaccinators are not overwhelmed** with more people than they can safely vaccinate at one time.
 - **Provide vaccinators time to thoughtfully** plan so that vaccines can be efficiently administered.
 - **Storage space is limited** due to the unique storage needs of the two authorized COVID-19 vaccine.
- DHS takes into consideration recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) and the State Medical Advisory Committee (SDMAC) when deciding who is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
 - ACIP is a committee within the CDC
 - SDMAC is a committee of volunteer medical professionals
 - Both ACIP and SDMAC provide advice and guidance on the equitable and fair delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- We cannot be certain when everyone will be able to receive the vaccine.
 - It will greatly depend on vaccine supply and the number of vaccines available
 - As more vaccine becomes available, we will continue to expand to other populations.
- Those eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine may receive information from their employer, or they may receive a call from their health care provider about scheduling an appointment to receive the vaccine.
 - DHS also plans on using a number of avenues to communicate with the public about vaccine eligibility and distribution
 - [Vaccine webpage](#)
 - [Weekly email update sign-up](#)
 - Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#)

Equity Considerations and the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)

- **Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)** is a measurement tool used to assess and identify communities that will likely need additional support or considerations due to a variety of social factors.
- These factors drive health outcomes. Some of these factors include:
 - Poverty, economic conditions, housing, transportation, and access to critical services.

- Populations or communities that are more socially vulnerable have also been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
 - These disparities are evident in populations that, despite good public health practices, may have higher rates of infection, death, or hospitalizations.
 - Populations with a higher SVI are bearing the brunt of this pandemic.
 - By vaccinating groups disproportionately impacted, we are more efficiently able to slow the spread of the disease.
- The [State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee \(SDMAC\)](#) uses the concepts within the SVI to consider which populations in Wisconsin should be prioritized for vaccine.
 - Due to the limited supply of vaccine, Wisconsin's COVID-19 vaccination rollout follows a phased approach.
 - This means a small group of individuals are initially eligible for vaccine. As more vaccine becomes available, more groups become eligible to get protected against COVID-19.
 - SDMAC provides DHS with recommendations on which populations should receive vaccine. SDMAC makes these determinations based off of:
 - Those who are at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19.
 - Those who are at higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19 infection.
 - And, because social vulnerability impacts health outcomes, the SVI is an important tool is deciding which groups to prioritize.
- The SVI is a critical tool used in Wisconsin to help inform the weekly distribution of COVID-19 vaccination among eligible vaccinators.
 - This helps ensure health equity is built into the Wisconsin vaccination program.
 - DHS is prioritizing the equitable, quick, and safe distribution of vaccine across the state.

Populations Eligible for Vaccine

It is important to remember that as we begin vaccine distribution, vaccine supply will be limited and vaccinations will be targeted to specific groups of people with a higher risk for COVID-19 infection.

Phase 1A Priority Population

- Until vaccine supply increases, we are following vaccine prioritization guidelines from the Wisconsin State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee's (SDMAC) [Phase 1A recommendations](#). Included in this Phase 1A are:
 - Residents of Long-Term Care Facilities
 - SDMAC's definition: "adults who reside in facilities that provide a variety of services, including medical and personal care, to persons who are unable to live independently."

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- Health care personnel
 - SDMAC's definition: "individuals who provide direct patient service (compensated and uncompensated) or engage in healthcare services that place them into contact with patients who are able to transmit SARS-CoV-2, and/or infectious material containing SARS-CoV-2 virus."
- In addition to Phase 1A, we are taking steps toward Phase 1B. These phases will overlap and anyone in Phase 1A will still be eligible for vaccine even once Phase 1B begins.
 - Police and Fire personnel are now eligible for vaccine.
 - Next week, individuals 65 and older will also be eligible.
- After we get more vaccine supply and vaccinate those in Phase 1A, we anticipate that Phase 1B may include non-health care frontline essential workers.

Individuals 65+ Vaccine Eligibility

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services announced that adults over the age of 65 will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine beginning January 25.

- We urge vaccinating entities with vaccine supply to immediately start vaccinating this population.
- There are approximately 700,000 Wisconsinites who are 65 and older currently in the state.
- They will be able to access the vaccine through their health care provider, pharmacy, or local or tribal public health agency.
- Those being vaccinated directly through their health care provider will typically be contacted to schedule an appointment by their provider.

Older adults have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and prioritizing this population will help save lives.

- Adults 60 and older have made up 92% of COVID-19 deaths in WI
- COVID-19, on average, has more severe consequences in older adults.

Expanding the age eligibility provides an opportunity for local and tribal health departments to advance community vaccination plans across the state.

- This work will build on current and new partnerships and is ready to expand as quickly as vaccine supplies allow.
- Vaccinating entities with any vaccine on hand can begin to vaccinate adults over the age of 65 prior to January 25.

We ask for continued patience as we expand populations eligible for vaccine.

- Due to the limited supply of vaccine allocated from the federal government, vaccinations for this group may take some time.

Police, Fire, and Correctional Officers Vaccine Eligibility

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- This week public safety officers are eligible for vaccine.
- Local Health Departments (LHD) will be leading the coordination for the vaccination of Police and Fire personnel, as well as EMS and unaffiliated health care providers in their jurisdictions.
 - This will be a partnership of local vaccinators, including health care systems and pharmacies.
 - To ensure vaccine access statewide, DHS will also work alongside LHDs in coordinating with police and fire associations.
- This is an important step toward Phase 1B. As more vaccine providers are finishing vaccinations for Phase 1A or vaccinating unaffiliated health care workers, DHS is leveraging the current vaccine infrastructure to ensure more Wisconsinites can get protected against COVID-19.
 - Public Safety Officers represent approximately 30,000 people across the state.
 - By making this group eligible, Wisconsin is able to continue increasing vaccination rates.

Next Eligible Groups

- **DHS has announced the next groups eligible for the vaccine. Vaccinations for these populations tentatively begin March 1.**
 - This group will include (in order of priority):
 - Educators and child care
 - Individuals enrolled in Medicaid long-term care programs
 - Some public-facing essential workers including food supply, public transit, utility and communications infrastructure, and 911 operators
 - Non-frontline health care essential personnel
 - Congregate living facility staff and residents
- **March 1 is a tentative date dependent on vaccine supply from the federal government.**
 - If vaccine supply increases from the federal government these populations may become eligible before March 1, however, if vaccine supply decreases they may be eligible after March 1.
- **Vaccine prioritization allows the limited supply of vaccine to be used as efficiently as possible:**
 - The federal government currently allocates approximately 70,000 doses of vaccine to Wisconsin each week.
 - The age 65 and older population alone includes 700,000 individuals
 - And there are about 600,000 individuals in these future eligible populations which could begin on March 1.
 - These prioritizations help protect populations that are at increased risk of exposure and more vulnerable to severe infection from COVID-19.
- **It will take time to reach all people within each priority population and phase.**
 - There is not a hard start or stop for each phase.
 - As vaccine supply and the number of vaccinators increase, phases for distribution may overlap.
- **In the meantime, health care personnel, residents of long-term care facilities, police, fire, and correctional officers, and individuals age 65 and older are all currently eligible for vaccine.**

Mobile Vaccination Program

- **The Wisconsin vaccine team launched the Mobile Vaccination Program last week.**
 - Mobile vaccination is a collaboration between DHS, Wisconsin National Guard (WING), and the University of Wisconsin.
 - The state will begin the program with nine mobile vaccination teams and scale up as processes are refined.
- **Local and Tribal health departments (LTHDs) are leading the coordination of vaccination for Police and Fire personnel, as well as EMS and unaffiliated health care providers in their jurisdictions.**
 - These mobile vaccination teams will support and assist local vaccination efforts, upon the request of local health departments, when local vaccination capacity has been exceeded.
 - Mobile clinics will be staffed by WING and pharmacy or nursing students from the University of Wisconsin.
- **Mobile vaccination will help accelerate vaccination efforts and expand vaccine access across Wisconsin.**
 - The program will leverage local partnerships in order to support vaccinations of Phase 1A populations—and throughout Phase 1B and beyond.
 - As the state has the supply to vaccinate more and more Wisconsinites, this program will help ensure the safe and equitable rollout of Wisconsin's COVID-19 Vaccine program.

Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program for Long-Term Care

- This program was launched to ensure that some of the Wisconsin's most vulnerable populations are protected against COVID-19.
 - This private-public partnership pairs eligible long-term care facilities with Walgreens or CVS to provide free, on-site COVID-19 vaccination for residents and staff.
 - It also reduces the strain on our LTC facilities.
- Across the state, there are 5,063 facilities currently enrolled. The program is split into two parts.
 - Part A launched December 28 and serves residents and staff of skilled nursing facilities.
 - Part B launches January 25 and provides vaccinations to remaining facilities enrolled in the program, including assisted living facilities
 - Pharmacies may start earlier if they have adequate vaccine supply and capacity.
- To ensure all LTC residents and staff can be protected against COVID-19, state health officials are reserving a portion of Wisconsin's Moderna vaccine allocation.
 - DHS is using 56,800 doses from our Moderna vaccine allocation for skilled nursing facilities.
 - 140,000 additional doses of the Moderna vaccine need to be reserved for the Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program's rollout to other long-term care facilities

- Wisconsin is only being allocated 70,000-80,000 doses per week, so we need to build up a bank of vaccine for the other long-term care facilities over the coming weeks, while continuing to vaccinate healthcare providers.

Unaffiliated or Independent Health Care Worker Vaccine Plan

- **Our local departments (LHDs) are leading the coordination of vaccination efforts.**
 - LHDs will continue to develop partnerships with local vaccine providers and identify unaffiliated health care workers that need vaccine.
 - Hospital, clinics, and pharmacies are also encouraged to partner with LHDs.
 - Our vaccination team will support LHDs in this effort.
 - Guidance was provided to LHDs and can be viewed [here](#).
- **EMS, unaffiliated, and independent health care workers in Phase 1A will be able to get vaccinated through their local health departments (LHDs).**
 - If you are an EMS worker or not affiliated with a health care system, please visit your [local health department's website](#).
- **DHS is also working to identify gaps in vaccine accessibility.**
 - If LHDs are unable to vaccinate or partner with vaccine providers, LHDs can request support from Wisconsin's mobile vaccination teams.
 - Vaccine supply is still limited but as more doses are allocated to Wisconsin, more individuals eligible for vaccine will have the opportunity to get protected against COVID-19.
- **Vaccine supply is limited. We appreciate your continued patience as we continue to ramp up vaccination efforts.**
 - The federal government allocates vaccine to each state based on population size. At the moment our allocation amount exceeds the demand for vaccine.
 - We expect more vaccine to become available in the coming months.
 - In the meantime, the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 is to continue wearing a mask, physical distancing, practicing good hand hygiene, and staying home as much as possible.
- To learn more about vaccine eligibility and Wisconsin's phased approach, we encourage you to visit <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/vaccine-about.htm>.

Continued Messages

- **Public Health Practices:**
 - We are all ready for this pandemic to over. And while the COVID-19 vaccination program is critical to getting back to our Wisconsin way of life, we urge all Wisconsinites—even those that have been vaccinated—to continue practicing good public health.

- Stay home as much as possible
- Wear a mask
- Keep at least 6 feet away from others
- Wash your hands frequently
- To make it easier for the vaccine to do its job in the future, we need to reduce the spread of COVID-19 today.
- Even after you are vaccinated, you'll still need to practice good pandemic behavior.
 - The current vaccines under EUA need two doses for full protection and it takes several weeks after the second dose for your body to build full immunity (protection).
- It will take months to reach community immunity. We must continue to stay home, wear a mask, physically distance, and practice good hand hygiene.
- **Vaccine Distribution:**
 - We all want to go back to living normal lives. That is why we are working to get the vaccine to Wisconsinites as equitably, quickly, and safely as possible. We ask for your patience as we work together to get back to our Wisconsin way of life.
 - As vaccine supply increases, recommendations for who can get vaccinated will change.
 - We will communicate the expanded recommendations to you through media briefings, our partners, and our website.
- **Vaccine Education/Safety:**
 - A vaccine takes a very small and harmless part of a pathogen, like COVID-19, and teaches your body how to respond before you come in contact with the virus in real life.
 - Think of it like a training course for your immune system.
 - For some people this may be the first vaccine you have gotten in a while-maybe since childhood-so you need to know that the vaccine will likely cause you to have a sore arm and potentially a fever. That is a normal part of getting vaccinated.
 - You need both doses to have full protection.
 - Ask your vaccinator when you need to come back for the second dose before you leave the vaccination clinic.
- **For up-to-date information regarding the vaccine:**
 - Visit dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/vaccine.htm
 - Visit our DHS Facebook page for upcoming media briefings.